THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/worksofhenrikibs09ibse

THE WORKS OF HENRIK IBSEN

THE VIKING EDITION

VOLUME

IX

PT 8352
E5A7
v.9

Mrs. Fiske as Rebecca West in Rosmersholm

HENRIK IBSEN

ROSMERSHOLM
THE LADY FROM THE SEA

WITH INTRODUCTIONS BY

WILLIAM ARCHER

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1912

Copyright, 1912, by Charles Scribner's Sons

CONTENTS

PAGE

INTRODUCTION TO "ROSMERSHOLM" 3

"ROSMERSHOLM" 17

Translated by CHARLES ARCHER

INTRODUCTION TO "THE LADY FROM THE SEA" . 199

"THE LADY FROM THE SEA" 211

Translated by MRS. FRANCES E. ARCHER

ILLUSTRATIONS

MRS. FISKE AS REBECCA WEST IN "ROSMERSHOLM" . . . . . *Frontispiece*

FACING PAGE

MOLDE: THE SCENE OF ROSMERSHOLM IS LAID IN THIS PART OF NORWAY 96

HENRIK IBSEN, ABOUT 1890 320

ROSMERSHOLM

ROSMERSHOLM

INTRODUCTION *

No one who ever saw Henrik Ibsen, in his later years at any rate, could doubt that he was a born aristocrat. It is said that a change came over his appearance and manner after the publication of *Brand*—that he then put off the Bohemian and put on the reserved, correct, punctilious man-of-the-world. When I first saw him in 1881, he had the air of a polished statesman or diplomatist. Distinction was the note of his personality. So early as 1872, he had written to George Brandes, who was then involved in one of his many controversies, "Be dignified! Dignity is the only weapon against such assaults." His actual words, *Vær fornem!* mean, literally translated, "Be distinguished!" No democratic movement which implied a levelling-down, could ever command Ibsen's sympathy. He was a leveller-up, or nothing.

This deep-rooted trait in his character found its supreme expression in *Rosmersholm*.

One of his first remarks (to Brandes, January 3, 1882) after the storm had broken out over *Ghosts* was: "I feel most painfully affected by the crudity, the plebeian element in all our public discussion. The very praiseworthy attempt to make of our people a democratic community

* Copyright, 1907, by Charles Scribner's Sons

has inadvertently gone a good way towards making us a plebeian community. Distinction of soul seems to be on the decline at home." The same trend of thought makes itself felt again and again in Dr. Stockmann's great speech in the fourth act of *An Enemy of the People;* but it appears only incidentally in that play, and not at all in *The Wild Duck.* It was a visit which he paid to Norway in the summer of 1885 that brought the need for "ennoblement" of character into the foreground of his thought, and inspired him with the idea of *Rosmersholm.* "Since he had last been home," writes Henrik Jæger, "the great political battle had been fought out, and had left behind it a fanaticism and bitterness of spirit which astounded him. He was struck by the brutality of the prevailing tone; he felt himself painfully affected by the rancorous and vulgar personalities which drowned all rational discussion of the principles at stake; and he observed with sorrow the many enmities to which the contest had given rise. . . . On the whole, he received the impression—as he remarked in conversation—that Norway was inhabited, not by two million human beings, but by two million cats and dogs. This impression has recorded itself in the picture of party divisions presented in *Rosmersholm.* The bitterness of the vanquished is admirably embodied in Rector Kroll; while the victors' craven reluctance to speak out their whole hearts is excellently characterised in the freethinker and opportunist, Mortensgård."

What was this "great political battle," the echoes of which reverberate through *Rosmersholm?* Though a knowledge of its details is in no way essential to the com-

prehension of the play, the following account[1] of it may not be out of place.

The Norwegian Constitution of 1814 gave the King of Norway and Sweden a suspensive veto on the enactments of the Norwegian Storthing, or Parliament, but provided that a bill passed by three successive triennial Storthings should become law without the Royal assent. This arrangement worked well enough until about 1870, when the Liberal party became alive to a flaw in the Constitution. The whole legislative and financial power was vested in the Storthing; but the Ministers had no seats in it and acknowledged no responsibility save to the King. Thus the overwhelming Liberal majority in the Storthing found itself baulked at every turn by a Conservative ministry, over which it had no effective control. In 1872, a Bill enacting that Ministers should sit in the Storthing was passed by 80 votes to 29, and was vetoed by the King. It was passed again and again by successive Storthings, the last time by 93 votes to 20; but now King Oscar came forward with a declaration that *on matters affecting the Constitution* his veto was not suspensive, but absolute, and once more vetoed the Bill. This measure was met by the Storthing with a resolution (June 9, 1880) that the Act had become law in spite of the veto. The King ignored the resolution, and, by the advice of his Ministers, claimed an absolute veto, not only on constitutional questions, but on measures of supply. Then the Storthing adopted the last resource provided by the Constitution: it impeached the Ministers before the Supreme Court

[1] Condensed from an article in the *Fortnightly Review*, September, 1885.

of the kingdom. Political rancour ran incredibly high, and there was a great final tussle over the composition of the Supreme Court; but the Liberals were masters of the situation, and carried all before them. One by one the Ministers were dismissed from office and fined. The King ostentatiously testified his sympathy with them, and selected a new Ministry from the Extreme Right. They failed to carry on the government of the country, and matters were at a deadlock. At last, however, King Oscar gave way. On June 26, 1884, he sent for Johan Sverdrup, the statesman who for a quarter of a century had guided the counsels of the Liberal party. Sverdrup consented to form a Ministry, and the battle ended in a Liberal victory along the whole line.

Ten years elapsed between Ibsen's hegira of 1864 and his first brief return to his native land. Before his second visit eleven more years intervened; and during the summer of 1885, which he spent for the most part at Molde, he found the air still quivering with the rancours begotten of the great struggle. In a speech which he addressed to a meeting of workmen at Trondhjem (June 14, 1885) he said that the years of his absence had brought "immense progress in most directions," but that he was disappointed to observe that "the most indispensable individual rights were far less secured than he had hoped and expected to find them under the new order of things." He found neither freedom of thought nor freedom of speech beyond a limit arbitrarily fixed by the dominant majority. "There remains much to be done," he continued, "before we can be said to have attained real liberty. But I fear that our present democracy will not be

equal to the task. An element of *nobility* must be introduced into our national life, into our Parliament, and into our Press. Of course it is not nobility of birth that I am thinking of, nor of money, nor yet of knowledge, nor even of ability and talent: I am thinking of nobility of character, of will, of soul."

When he spoke these words he had been little more than a week in Norway; but it is clear that *Rosmersholm* was already germinating in his mind.

On his return to Munich he began to think out the play, and on February 14, 1886, he wrote to Carl Snoilsky, the Swedish poet: "I am much taken up with a new play, which I have long had in mind, and for which I made careful studies during my visit to Norway." It may be mentioned that Ibsen had met Snoilsky at Molde during the previous summer, and that they had seen a good deal of each other. The manuscript of *Rosmersholm* was sent to the printers at the end of September, 1886, and a letter to Hegel accompanied it in which Ibsen said: "So far as I can see, the play is not likely to call forth attacks from any quarter; but I hope it will lead to lively discussion. I look for this especially in Sweden." Why in Sweden? Perhaps because, as we shall see presently, the story was partly suggested by a recent episode in Swedish social history. Before proceeding to the question of origins, however, I may quote the only other reference to the play, of any importance, which occurs in Ibsen's letters. The chairman of a debating club in Christiania had addressed to the poet a letter on behalf of the club, which apparently contained some question or suggestion as to the fundamental idea of the play. Ibsen's answer was dated Mu-

nich, February 13, 1887. "The call to work," he said, "is certainly distinguishable throughout *Rosmersholm*. But the play also deals with the struggle with himself which every serious-minded man must face in order to bring his life into harmony with his convictions. For the different spiritual functions do not develop evenly and side by side in any given human being. The acquisitive instinct hastens on from conquest to conquest. The moral consciousness, the conscience, on the other hand is very conservative. It has deep roots in tradition and the past generally. Hence arises the conflict in the individual. But first and foremost, of course, the play is a creative work, dealing with human beings and human destinies."

Dr. George Brandes is our authority for associating *Rosmersholm* with the social episode above alluded to —an episode which came within Ibsen's ken just while the play was in process of gestation. A Swedish nobleman, personally known to Ibsen, and remarkable for that amenity and distinction of manner which he attributes to Rosmer, had been unhappily married to a lady who shared none of his interests, and was intellectually quite unsympathetic to him. Much more sympathetic was a female relative of his wife's. The relation between them attracted attention, and (as in *Rosmersholm*) was the subject of venomous paragraphs in the local Press. Count Blank left his home and went abroad, was joined by the sympathetic cousin, resigned the high office which he held in his native country, and returned to his wife the fortune she had brought him. Shortly afterwards the Countess died of consumption, which was, of course, supposed to have been accelerated by her husband's misconduct.

The use that Ibsen made of this unhappy story affords a perfect example of the working-up of raw material in the factory of genius. Not one of the traits that constitute the originality and greatness of the play is to be found in the actual circumstances. He remodelled the whole episode; it was plastic as a sculptor's clay in his hands; but doubtless it did give him something to seize upon and re-create. For the character of Rebecca, it is believed (on rather inadequate grounds, it seems to me) that Ibsen borrowed some traits from Charlotte Stieglitz, who committed suicide in 1834, in the vain hope of stimulating the intellectual activity of her husband, a minor poet.[1] For Ulric Brendel, Dr. Brahm relates that Ibsen found a model in an eccentric "dream-genius" known to him in Italy, who created only in his mind, and despised writing. But Brendel is so clearly a piece of the poet's own "devilment" as he used to call it, that it is rather idle to look for his "original." The scene of the play is said to have been suggested to Ibsen by an old family seat near Molde. Be this as it may, Dr. Brandes is certainly mistaken in declaring that there is no such "castle" as Rosmersholm in Norway, and thence arguing that Ibsen had begun to write for a cosmopolitan rather than a Norwegian audience. Rosmersholm is not a "castle" at all; and old houses such as Ibsen describes are far from uncommon.

The *Literary Remains* enable us to trace Rosmersholm to its completion from a very embryonic form. It was

[1] See note (in the Norwegian and German editions) to Ibsen's *Letters*, No. 146. As to Charlotte Stieglitz, see Brandes' *Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature*, vol. vi., p. 296.

at first to have been called *White Horses.* Here is the earliest memorandum for it:—

He, the delicate, distinguished nature, who has gone over to a liberal (literally, "free-minded") standpoint, and from whom all his former friends and acquaintances have drawn back. Widower: has been unhappily married to a melancholic, half-mad wife, who at last drowned herself.

She: his two daughters' governess, emancipated, warm-blooded, somewhat unscrupulous, but in a refined way. Is regarded by the neighbourhood as the evil genius of the house: is the object of misinterpretation and backbiting.

The Elder Daughter: is on the point of breaking down through loneliness and want of occupation: rich endowment with no outlet for it.

The Younger Daughter: observant, budding passions.

The Journalist; genius, vagabond.

It is evident that the poet had as yet no idea of the terrible tragedy of Rebecca's relation to Beata; he could scarcely have described as "somewhat unscrupulous" a woman who, under the mask of friendship, goaded another to suicide. Rosmer's two daughters, we see, disappeared from Rosmersholm, to reappear in *The Lady from the Sea*, as Boletta and Hilda Wangel.

Ibsen fumbled around a good deal for the names in this play. Rosmer appears at first as "Boldt-Römer," and then, without any warning, he changes into "Rosenhielm." Rebecca is at first "Miss Badeck" or "Radeck." Then there was a period during which she was

married to Rosmer. Through an act and a half she figures as "Mrs. Rosmer"; and then, in the middle of a draft of the second act she suddenly comes unmarried again and is called "Miss Dankert." While she was Mrs. Rosmer, her Christian name was "Agatha"; in the "Miss Dankert" stage it was Rebecca; not until the third act is reached does she become Rebecca West. Kroll was at first to have been called Hekmann; then he became "Rector Gylling," a patently inappropriate name, inasmuch as it suggests the Norwegian word for "chicken." Ulric Brendel, in one stage of incubation, adopted Rosmer's cast-off name of "Rosenhielm"; and somewhat later he became "Scierhielm."

In the earliest draft of the first act that has come down to us, Rosmer (as Boldt-Römer) speaks to Miss Radeck about his daughters, saying that he does not like the idea of their skating on the mill-dam where their mother was drowned, even though they themselves are ignorant of the fact. Then Kroll (as Hekmann) enters, and remonstrates with him for resigning his pastorate; but the fragment breaks off before Rosmer (now Rosenhielm) has confessed his "apostasy." Of a later and more developed draft we have two acts practically complete. It is in this phase that Rebecca is first "Mrs. Rosmer" and then "Miss Dankert." The two daughters have by this time disappeared; but Rosmer says to Gylling (Kroll), "We do not find it painful to dwell on the thought either of Agneta (Beata) or of little Alfred." This is the only allusion to "little Alfred," and we cannot say with certainty what was in Ibsen's mind when he wrote it. Can he have intended that the dead wife should have had a child, and should have taken the child with her into the mill-race?

For the rest, the lines of the completed play seem by this time to be pretty clear in the poet's mind, but its structure is still flaccid and in need of stern compression. It is significant that Rosmer does not, in the first act, confess to Kroll his change of heart. He is on the point of doing so when he is interrupted by the entrance of Rosenhielm (Brendel). The confession being thus deferred till the second act, the first act ends (like the first act of *Pillars of Society*) without any clear announcement of the coming struggle. The student of technique may learn an invaluable lesson in noting the enormous improvement effected by the transference of Rosmer's avowal from the second to the first act. After the draft second act, the further drafts became fragmentary, and are all very much on the lines of the completed play. The one exception may be found in an alternative version of the first Brendel scene, in which Brendel (at this stage called Hetman) expresses his intention of preaching land nationalisation, and is greatly cast down on learning that his theories have been anticipated in a well-known book—an allusion, no doubt, to Henry George's *Progress and Poverty*. Ibsen showed his usual fine instinct in abandoning this idea.

A still more fortunate change was the remodelling of the passage in which we first hear of the White Horse of Rosmersholm. As it originally stood, it afforded an example of the lapses which would now and then occur in Ibsen's sense of humour:—

Mrs. Rosmer (Rebecca). What was that you once told me, Madam Helset? You said that, from time immemorial, something strange happened here at Rosmersholm whenever one of the family died.

MADAM HELSET. Yes, it is as true as I stand here. Then the white horse comes.

ROSMER. Oh, that old family legend——

MRS. ROSMER. In it comes at the dead of night. Into the courtyard. Through the closed gate. Neighs loudly. Kicks up its hind legs, gallops once round, and then out again at a tearing gallop?

MADAM HELSET. Yes, that's just how it is. Both my mother and my grandmother have seen it.

Unless we are to suppose that Rebecca is deliberately burlesquing the superstition, the white horse which kicks up its hind legs must be classed with the steamboat in *Little Eyolf* which has "one red eye and one green." But, unlike the steamboat, the kicking horse did not pursue its mad career into the finished play.

Published on November 23, 1886, *Rosmersholm* was first acted in Bergen in January, 1887, in Gothenburg in March, in Christiania and Stockholm not till April. Copenhagen did not see it until November, 1887, when it was acted by a Swedish travelling company. Its first production in Germany took place at Augsburg in April, 1887, the poet himself being present. It was produced in Berlin in May, 1887, in Vienna not till May, 1893. There are few of the leading German theatres where it has not been acted, and has not taken a more or less prominent place in the repertory. In Germany indeed (though not elsewhere) it seems to rank among Ibsen's most popular works. In London, *Rosmersholm* was first acted at the Vaudeville Theatre on February 23, 1891, Mr. F. R. Benson playing Rosmer, and Miss Florence Farr, Rebecca. Four performances of it were given at the Opera

Comique in 1893, with Mr. Lewis Waller as Rosmer, and Miss Elizabeth Robins as Rebecca. In 1892, a writer who adopted the pseudonym of "Austin Fryers" produced, at the Globe Theatre, a play called *Beata*, which purported to be a "prologue" to *Rosmersholm*—the drama which Ibsen (perversely, in Mr. Fryers' judgment) chose to narrate instead of exhibiting it in action. Not until 1893 was *Rosmersholm* produced in Paris, by the company entitled "L'Œuvre," under the direction of M. Lugné Poé. This company afterwards acted it in London and in many other cities—among the rest in Christiania. In Italy, Eleonora Duse added the play to her repertory, with scenery designed by Mr. Gordon Craig. In America Rebecca has been acted with great success by Mrs. Fiske.

With *Rosmersholm* we reach the end of the series of social dramas which began seventeen years earlier with *The League of Youth*. In all these plays the individual is treated, more or less explicitly, as a social unit, a member of a class, an example of some collective characteristic, or a victim of some collective superstition, injustice, or stupidity. The plays which follow, on the other hand, beginning with *The Lady from the Sea*, are plays of pure psychology. There are, no doubt, many women like Ellida Wangel or Hedda Gabler; but it is as individuals, not as members of a class, that they interest us; nor is their fate conditioned, like that of Nora or Mrs. Alving, by any social prejudice or pressure. But in *Rosmersholm* man is still considered as a "political animal." The play, as we have seen, actually took its rise as a protest against a morbid condition of the Norwegian public mind, as observed by the poet at a particular point of time. George

Brandes, indeed, has very justly contended that it ought to rank with *An Enemy of the People* and *The Wild Duck* as a direct outcome of that momentous incident in Ibsen's career, the fierce attack upon *Ghosts*. "Rosmer," says Dr. Brandes, "begins where Stockmann left off. He wants to do from the very first what the doctor only wanted to do at the end of *An Enemy of the People*—to make proud, free, noble beings of his countrymen. At the beginning of the play, Rosmer is believed to be a decided Conservative (which the Norwegians considered Ibsen to be for many years after *The League of Youth*), and as long as this view is generally held, he is esteemed and admired, while everything that concerns him is interpreted in the most favourable manner. As soon, however, as his complete intellectual emancipation is discovered, and especially when it appears that he himself does not attempt to conceal the change in his views, public opinion turns against him. . . . Ibsen had been almost as much exposed as Rosmer to every sort of attack for some time after the publication of *Ghosts*, which (from the Conservative point of view) marked his conversion to Radicalism." The analogy between Ibsen's experience and Rosmer's is far too striking not to have been present to the poet's mind.

But, though the play distinctly belongs to the social series, it no less distinctly foreshadows the transition to the psychological series. Rosmer and Rebecca (or I am greatly mistaken) stand out from the social background much more clearly than their predecessors. They seem to grow away from it. At first they are concerned about political duties and social ideals; but, as the action proceeds, all these considerations drop away from them, or

recur but as remembered dreams, and they are alone with their tortured souls. Then we cannot but note the intrusion of pure poetry—imagination scarcely deigning to allege a realistic pretext—in the personage of Ulric Brendel. He is of the same kindred as the Stranger in *The Lady from the Sea*, and the Rat Wife in *Little Eyolf*. He marks Ibsen's final rebellion against the prosaic restrictions which, from *Pillars of Society* onwards, he had striven to impose upon his genius.

He was yet to write plays more fascinating than *Rosmersholm*, but none greater in point of technical mastery. It surpasses *The Wild Duck* in the simplicity of its material, and in that concentration which renders its effect on the stage, perhaps, a little monotonous, and so detracts from its popularity. In construction it is a very marvel of cunning complexity. It is the consummate example in modern times of the retrospective method of which, in ancient times, the consummate example was the *Œdipus Rex*. This method has been blamed by many critics; but the first great critic of English drama commended it in the practice of the ancient poets. "They set the audience, as it were," says Dryden, "at the post where the race is to be concluded." "In unskilful hands," I have said elsewhere, "the method might doubtless become very tedious; but when, as in *Rosmersholm*, every phase of the retrospect has a definite reaction upon the drama—the psychological process—actually passing on the stage, the effect attained is surely one of peculiar richness and depth. The drama of the past and the drama of the present are interwoven in such a complex yet clear and stately harmony as Ibsen himself has not often rivalled."

ROSMERSHOLM

(1886)

CHARACTERS

JOHANNES ROSMER, *of Rosmersholm, formerly clergyman of the parish.*
REBECCA WEST, *in charge of Rosmer's household.*
RECTOR[1] KROLL, *Rosmer's brother-in-law.*
ULRIC BRENDEL.
PETER MORTENSGÅRD.[2]
MADAM HELSETH, *housekeeper at Rosmersholm.*

The action takes place at Rosmersholm, an old family seat near a small coast town in the west of Norway.

[1] "Rector" in the Scotch and Continental sense of headmaster of a school, not in the English sense of a beneficed clergyman.
[2] Pronounce *Mortensgore.*

ROSMERSHOLM

PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

ACT FIRST

Sitting-room at Rosmersholm; spacious, old-fashioned, and comfortable. In front, on the right, a stove decked with fresh birch-branches and wild flowers. Farther back, on the same side, a door. In the back wall, folding-doors opening into the hall. To the left, a window, and before it a stand with flowers and plants. Beside the stove a table with a sofa and easy-chairs. On the walls, old and more recent portraits of clergymen, officers, and government officials in uniform. The window is open; so are the door into the hall and the house door beyond. Outside can be seen an avenue of fine old trees, leading up to the house. It is a summer evening, after sunset.

REBECCA WEST *is sitting in an easy-chair by the window, and crocheting a large white woollen shawl, which is nearly finished. She now and then looks out expectantly through the leaves of the plants.* MADAM HELSETH *presently enters from the right.*

MADAM HELSETH.

I suppose I had better begin to lay the table, Miss?

REBECCA WEST.

Yes, please do. The Pastor must soon be in now.

MADAM HELSETH.

Don't you feel the draught, Miss, where you're sitting?

REBECCA.

Yes, there is a little draught. Perhaps you had better shut the window.

[MADAM HELSETH *shuts the door into the hall, and then comes to the window.*

MADAM HELSETH.

[*About to shut the window, looks out.*] Why, isn't that the Pastor over there?

REBECCA.

[*Hastily.*] Where? [*Rises.*] Yes, it is he. [*Behind the curtain.*] Stand aside—don't let him see us.

MADAM HELSETH.

[*Keeping back from the window.*] Only think, Miss—he's beginning to take the path by the mill again.

REBECCA.

He went that way the day before yesterday too. [*Peeps out between the curtains and the window-frame.*] But let us see whether——

MADAM HELSETH.

Will he venture across the foot-bridge?

REBECCA.

That is what I want to see. [*After a pause.*] No, he is turning. He is going by the upper road again. [*Leaves the window.*] A long way round.

MADAM HELSETH.

Dear Lord, yes. No wonder the Pastor thinks twice about setting foot on t h a t bridge. A place where a thing like that has happened——

REBECCA.

[*Folding up her work.*] They cling to their dead here at Rosmersholm.

MADAM HELSETH.

Now *I* would say, Miss, that it's the dead that clings to Rosmersholm.

REBECCA.

[*Looks at her.*] The dead?

MADAM HELSETH.

Yes, it's almost as if they couldn't tear themselves away from the folk that are left.

REBECCA.

What makes you fancy that?

MADAM HELSETH.

Well, if it wasn't for that, there would be no White Horse, I suppose.

REBECCA.

Now what i s all this about the White Horse, Madam Helseth?

MADAM HELSETH.

Oh, I don't like to talk about it. And, besides, you don't believe in such things.

REBECCA.

Do y o u believe in it, then?

MADAM HELSETH.

[*Goes and shuts the window.*] Oh, you'd only be for laughing at me, Miss. [*Looks out.*] Why, isn't that Mr. Rosmer on the mill-path again——?

REBECCA.

[*Looks out.*] That man t h e r e? [*Goes to the window.*] No, that's the Rector!

MADAM HELSETH.

Yes, so it is.

REBECCA.

This is delightful. You may be sure he's coming here.

MADAM HELSETH.

He goes straight over the foot-bridge, h e does. And yet she was his sister, his own flesh and blood. Well, I'll go and lay the table then, Miss West.

[*She goes out to the right.* REBECCA *stands at the window for a short time; then smiles and nods to some one outside. It begins to grow dark.*

REBECCA.

[*Goes to the door on the right.*] Oh, Madam Helseth, you might let us have some little extra dish for supper. You know what the Rector likes best.

MADAM HELSETH.

[*Outside.*] Oh yes, Miss, I'll see to it.

REBECCA.

[*Opens the door to the hall.*] At last—! How glad I am to see you, my dear Rector.

RECTOR KROLL.

[*In the hall, laying down his stick.*] Thanks. Then I am not disturbing you?

REBECCA.

You? How can you ask?

KROLL.

[*Comes in.*] Amiable as ever. [*Looks round.*] Is Rosmer upstairs in his room?

REBECCA.

No, he is out walking. He has stayed out rather longer than usual; but he is sure to be in directly. [*Motioning him to sit on the sofa.*] Won't you sit down till he comes?

KROLL.

[*Laying down his hat.*] Many thanks. [*Sits down and looks about him.*] Why, how you have brightened up the old room! Flowers everywhere!

REBECCA.

Mr. Rosmer is so fond of having fresh, growing flowers about him.

KROLL.

And you are too, are you not?

REBECCA.

Yes; they have a delightfully soothing effect on me. We had to do without them though, till lately.

KROLL.

[*Nods sadly.*] Yes, their scent was too much for poor Beata.

REBECCA.

Their colours, too. They quite bewildered her——

KROLL.

I remember, I remember. [*In a lighter tone.*] Well, how are things going out here?

REBECCA.

Oh, everything is going its quiet, jog-trot way. One day is just like another.—And with you? Your wife——?

KROLL.

Ah, my dear Miss West, don't let us talk about my affairs. There is always something or other amiss in a family; especially in times like these.

REBECCA.

[*After a pause, sitting down in an easy-chair beside the sofa.*] How is it you haven't once been near us during the whole of the holidays?

KROLL.

Oh, it doesn't do to make oneself a nuisance——

REBECCA.

If you knew how we have missed you——

KROLL.

And then I have been away——

REBECCA.

Yes, for the last week or two. We have heard of you at political meetings.

KROLL.

[*Nods.*] Yes, what do you say to that? Did you think I would turn political agitator in my old age, eh?

REBECCA.

[*Smiling.*] Well, you have always been a bit of an agitator, Rector Kroll.

KROLL.

Why yes, just for my private amusement. But henceforth it is to be no laughing matter, I can tell you.—Do you ever see those radical newspapers?

REBECCA.

Well yes, my dear Rector, I can't deny that——

KROLL.

My dear Miss West, I have nothing to say against it—nothing in y o u r case.

REBECCA.

No, surely not. One likes to know what's going on—to keep up with the time——

KROLL.

And of course I should not think of expecting you, as a woman, to side actively with either party in the civil contest—I might almost say the civil war—that is raging among us.—But you have seen then, I suppose, how these gentlemen of "the people" have been pleased to treat me? What infamous abuse they have had the audacity to heap on me?

REBECCA.

Yes; but it seems to me you gave as good as you got.

KROLL.

So I did, though I say it that shouldn't. For now I have tasted blood; and they shall soon find to their cost that I am not the man to turn the other cheek—— [*Breaks off.*] But come, come—don't let us get upon that subject this evening—it's too painful and irritating.

REBECCA.

Oh no, don't let us talk of it.

KROLL.

Tell me now—how do you get on at Rosmersholm, now that you are alone. Since our poor Beata——

REBECCA.

Thank you, I get on very well. Of course one feels a great blank in many ways—a great sorrow and longing. But otherwise——

KROLL.

And do you think of remaining here?—permanently, I mean.

REBECCA.

My dear Rector, I really haven't thought about it, one way or the other. I have got so used to the place now, that I feel almost as if I belonged to it.

KROLL.

Why, of course you belong to it.

REBECCA.

And so long as Mr. Rosmer finds that I am of any use or comfort to him—why, so long, I suppose, I shall stay here.

KROLL.

[*Looks at her with emotion.*] Do you know,—it is really fine for a woman to sacrifice her whole youth to others as you have done.

REBECCA.

Oh, what else should I have had to live for?

KROLL.

First, there was your untiring devotion to your paralytic and exacting foster-father——

REBECCA.

You mustn't suppose that Dr. West was such a charge when we were up in Finmark. It was those terrible boat-

voyages up there that broke him down. But after we came here—well yes, the two years before he found rest were certainly hard enough.

KROLL.

And the years that followed—were they not even harder for you?

REBECCA.

Oh how can you say such a thing? When I was so fond of Beata—and when she, poor dear, stood so sadly in need of care and forbearance.

KROLL.

How good it is of you to think of her with so much kindness!

REBECCA.

[*Moves a little nearer.*] My dear Rector, you say that with such a ring of sincerity that I cannot think there is any ill-feeling lurking in the background.

KROLL.

Ill-feeling? Why, what do you mean?

REBECCA.

Well, it would be only natural if you felt it painful to see a stranger managing the household here at Rosmersholm.

KROLL.

Why, how on earth——!

REBECCA.

But you have no such feeling? [*Takes his hand.*] Thanks, my dear Rector; thank you again and again.

KROLL.

How on earth did you get such an idea into your head?

REBECCA.

I began to be a little afraid when your visits became so rare.

KROLL.

Then you have been on a totally wrong scent, Miss West. Besides—after all, there has been no essential change. Even while poor Beata was alive—in her last unhappy days—it was you, and you alone, that managed everything.

REBECCA.

That was only a sort of regency in Beata's name.

KROLL.

Be that as it may——. Do you know, Miss West—for my part, I should have no objection whatever if you——. But I suppose I mustn't say such a thing.

REBECCA.

What must you not say?

KROLL.

If matters were to shape so that you took the empty place——

REBECCA.

I have the only place I want, Rector.

KROLL.

In fact, yes; but not in——

REBECCA.

[*Interrupting gravely.*] For shame, Rector Kroll. How can you joke about such things?

KROLL.

Oh well, our good Johannes Rosmer very likely thinks he has had more than enough of married life already. But nevertheless——

REBECCA.

You are really too absurd, Rector.

KROLL.

Nevertheless——. Tell me, Miss West—if you will forgive the question—what is your age?

REBECCA.

I'm sorry to say I am over nine-and-twenty, Rector; I am in my thirtieth year.

KROLL.

Indeed. And Rosmer—how old is he? Let me see: he is five years younger than I am, so that makes him well over forty-three. I think it would be most suitable.

REBECCA.

[*Rises.*] Of course, of course; most suitable.—Will you stay to supper this evening?

KROLL.

Yes, many thanks; I thought of staying. There is a matter I want to discuss with our good friend.—And I suppose, Miss West, in case you should take fancies into your head again, I had better come out pretty often for the future—as I used to in the old days.

REBECCA.

Oh yes, do—do. [*Shakes both his hands.*] Many thanks—how kind and good you are!

KROLL.

[*Gruffly.*] Am I? Well, that's not what they tell me at home.

JOHANNES ROSMER *enters by the door on the right.*

REBECCA.

Mr. Rosmer, do you see who is here?

JOHANNES ROSMER.

Madam Helseth told me. [RECTOR KROLL *has risen.*

ROSMER.

[*Gently and softly, pressing his hands.*] Welcome back to this house, my dear Kroll. [*Lays his hands on* KROLL'S *shoulders and looks into his eyes.*] My dear old friend!

I knew that sooner or later things would come all right between us.

KROLL.

Why, my dear fellow—do you mean to say you too have been so foolish as to fancy there was anything wrong?

REBECCA.

[*To* ROSMER.] Yes, only think,—it was nothing but fancy after all!

ROSMER.

Is that really the case, Kroll? Then why did you desert us so entirely?

KROLL.

[*Gravely, in a low voice.*] Because my presence would always have been reminding you of the years of your unhappiness, and of—the life that ended in the mill-race.

ROSMER.

Well, it was a kind thought—you were always considerate. But it was quite unnecessary to remain away on that account.—Come, sit here on the sofa. [*They sit down.*] No, I assure you, the thought of Beata has no pain for me. We speak of her every day. We feel almost as if she were still one of the household.

KROLL.

Do you really?

REBECCA.

[*Lighting the lamp.*] Yes, indeed we do

ROSMER.

It is quite natural. We were both so deeply attached to her. And both Rebec—both Miss West and I know that we did all that was possible for her in her affliction. We have nothing to reproach ourselves with.—So I feel nothing but a tranquil tenderness now at the thought of Beata.

KROLL.

You dear, good people! Henceforward, I declare I shall come out and see you every day.

REBECCA.

[*Seats herself in an arm-chair.*] Mind, we shall expect you to keep your word.

ROSMER.

[*With some hesitation.*] My dear Kroll—I wish very much that our intercourse had never been interrupted. Ever since we have known each other, you have seemed predestined to be my adviser—ever since I went to the University.

KROLL.

Yes, and I have always been proud of the office. But is there anything particular just now——?

ROSMER.

There are many things that I would give a great deal to talk over with you, quite frankly—straight from the heart.

REBECCA.

Ah yes, Mr. Rosmer—that must be such a comfort—between old friends——

KROLL.

Oh I can tell you I have still more to talk to you about. I suppose you know I have turned a militant politician?

ROSMER.

Yes, so you have. How did that come about?

KROLL.

I was forced into it in spite of myself. It is impossible to stand idly looking on any longer. Now that the Radicals have unhappily come into power, it is high time something should be done,—so I have got our little group of friends in the town to close up their ranks. I tell you it is high time!

REBECCA.

[*With a faint smile.*] Don't you think it may even be a little late?

KROLL.

Unquestionably it would have been better if we had checked the stream at an earlier point in its course. But who could foresee what was going to happen? Certainly not I. [*Rises and walks up and down.*] But now I have had my eyes opened once for all; for now the spirit of revolt has crept into the school itself.

ROSMER.

Into the school? Surely not into y o u r school?

KROLL.

I tell you it has—into my own school. What do you think? It has come to my knowledge that the sixth-

form boys—a number of them at any rate—have been keeping up a secret society for over six months; and they take in Mortensgård's paper!

REBECCA.

The "Beacon"?

KROLL.

Yes; nice mental sustenance for future government officials, is it not? But the worst of it is that it's all the cleverest boys in the form that have banded together in this conspiracy against me. Only the dunces at the bottom of the class have kept out of it.

REBECCA.

Do you take this so very much to heart, Rector?

KROLL.

Do I take it to heart! To be so thwarted and opposed in the work of my whole life! [*Lower.*] But I could almost say I don't care about the school—for there is worse behind. [*Looks round.*] I suppose no one can hear us?

REBECCA.

Oh no, of course not.

KROLL.

Well then, I must tell you that dissension and revolt have crept into my own house—into my own quiet home. They have destroyed the peace of my family life.

ROSMER.

[*Rises.*] What! Into your own house——?

REBECCA.

[*Goes over to the* RECTOR.] My dear Rector, what has happened?

KROLL.

Would you believe that my own children—— In short, it is Laurits that is the ringleader of the school conspiracy; and Hilda has embroidered a red portfolio to keep the "Beacon" in.

ROSMER.

I should certainly never have dreamt that, in your own house——

KROLL.

No, who would have dreamt of such a thing? In my house, the very home of obedience and order—where one will, and one only, has always prevailed——

REBECCA.

How does your wife take all this?

KROLL.

Why, that is the most incredible part of it. My wife, who all her life long has shared my opinions and concurred in my views, both in great things and small—she is actually inclined to side with the children on many points. And she blames m e for what has happened. She says I tyrannise over the children. As if it weren't necessary to——. Well, you see how my house is divided against itself. But of course I say as little about it as

possible. Such things are best kept quiet. [*Wanders up the room.*] Ah, well, well, well.

[*Stands at the window with his hands behind his back, and looks out.*

REBECCA.

[*Comes up close to* ROSMER, *and says rapidly and in a low voice, so that the* RECTOR *does not hear her.*] Do it now!

ROSMER.

[*Also in a low voice.*] Not this evening.

REBECCA.

[*As before.*] Yes, just this evening.

[*Goes to the table and busies herself with the lamp.*

KROLL.

[*Comes forward.*] Well, my dear Rosmer, now you know how the spirit of the age has overshadowed both my domestic and my official life. And am I to refrain from combating this pernicious, subversive, anarchic spirit, with any weapon I can lay my hands on? Fight it I will, trust me for that; both with tongue and pen.

ROSMER.

Have you any hope of stemming the tide in that way?

KROLL.

At any rate I shall have done my duty as a citizen in defence of the State. And I hold it the duty of every

right-minded man with an atom of patriotism to do likewise. In fact—that was my principal reason for coming out here this evening.

ROSMER.

Why, my dear Kroll, what do you mean——? What can I——?

KROLL.

You can stand by your old friends. Do as we do. Lend a hand, with all your might.

REBECCA.

But, Rector Kroll, you know Mr. Rosmer's distaste for public life.

KROLL.

He must get over his distaste.—You don't keep abreast of things, Rosmer. You bury yourself alive here, with your historical collections. Far be it from me to speak disrespectfully of family trees and so forth; but, unfortunately, this is no time for hobbies of that sort. You cannot imagine the state things are in, all over the country. There is hardly a single accepted idea that hasn't been turned topsy-turvy. It will be a gigantic task to get all the errors rooted out again.

ROSMER.

I have no doubt of it. But I am the last man to undertake such a task.

REBECCA.

And besides, I think Mr. Rosmer has come to take a wider view of life than he used to.

KROLL.

[*With surprise.*] Wider?

REBECCA.

Yes; or freer, if you like—less one-sided.

KROLL.

What is the meaning of this? Rosmer—surely you are not so weak as to be influenced by the accident that the leaders of the mob have won a temporary advantage?

ROSMER.

My dear Kroll, you know how little I understand of politics. But I confess it seems to me that within the last few years people are beginning to show greater independence of thought.

KROLL.

Indeed! And you take it for granted that that must be an improvement! But in any case you are quite mistaken, my friend. Just inquire a little into the opinions that are current among the Radicals, both out here and in the town. They are neither more nor less than the wisdom that's retailed in the "Beacon."

REBECCA.

Yes; Mortensgård has great influence over many people hereabouts.

KROLL.

Yes, just think of it! A man of his foul antecedents—a creature that was turned out of his place as a school-

master on account of his immoral life! A fellow like that sets himself up as a leader of the people! And succeeds too! Actually succeeds! I hear he is going to enlarge his paper. I know on good authority that he is on the lookout for a capable assistant.

REBECCA.

I wonder that you and your friends don't set up an opposition to him.

KROLL.

That is the very thing we are going to do. We have to-day bought the *County News;* there was no difficulty about the money question. But—— [*Turns to* ROSMER.] Now I come to my real errand. The difficulty lies in the conduct of the paper—the editing——. Tell me, Rosmer,—don't you feel it your duty to undertake it, for the sake of the good cause?

ROSMER.

[*Almost in consternation.*] I!

REBECCA.

Oh, how can you think of such a thing?

KROLL.

I can quite understand your horror of public meetings, and your reluctance to expose yourself to their tender mercies. But an editor's work is less conspicuous, or rather——

ROSMER.

No no, my dear friend, you must not ask me to do this.

KROLL.

I should be quite willing to try my own hand at that style of work too; but I couldn't possibly manage it. I have such a multitude of irons in the fire already. But for you, with no profession to tie you down——. Of course the rest of us would give you as much help as we could.

ROSMER.

I cannot, Kroll. I am not fitted for it.

KROLL.

Not fitted? You said the same thing when your father preferred you to the living here——

ROSMER.

And I was right. That was why I resigned it.

KROLL.

Oh, if only you are as good an editor as you were a clergyman, we shall not complain.

ROSMER.

My dear Kroll—I tell you once for all—I cannot do it.

KROLL.

Well, at any rate, you will lend us your name.

ROSMER.

My name?

KROLL.

Yes, the mere name, Johannes Rosmer, will be a great thing for the paper. We others are looked upon as confirmed partisans—indeed I hear I am denounced as a desperate fanatic—so that if we work the paper in our own names, we can't reckon upon its making much way among the misguided masses. You, on the contrary, have always kept out of the fight. Everybody knows and values your humanity and uprightness—your delicacy of mind—your unimpeachable honour. And then the prestige of your former position as a clergyman still clings to you; and, to crown all, you have your grand old family name!

ROSMER.

Oh, my name——

KROLL.

[*Points to the portraits.*] Rosmers of Rosmersholm—clergymen and soldiers; government officials of high place and trust; gentlemen to the finger-tips, every man of them—a family that for nearly two centuries has held its place as the first in the district. [*Lays his hand on* ROSMER'S *shoulder.*] Rosmer—you owe it to yourself and to the traditions of your race to take your share in guarding all that has hitherto been held sacred in our society. [*Turns round.*] What do y o u say, Miss West?

REBECCA.

[*Laughing softly, as if to herself.*] My dear Rector—I can't tell you how ludicrous all this seems to me.

KROLL.

What do you say? Ludicrous?

REBECCA.

Yes, ludicrous. For you must let me tell you frankly——

ROSMER.

[*Quickly.*] No no—be quiet! Not just now!

KROLL.

[*Looks from one to the other.*] My dear friends, what on earth——? [*Interrupting himself.*] H'm!

MADAM HELSETH *appears in the doorway on the right.*

MADAM HELSETH.

There's a man out in the kitchen passage that says he wants to see the Pastor.

ROSMER.

[*Relieved.*] Ah, very well. Ask him to come in.

MADAM HELSETH.

Into the sitting-room?

ROSMER.

Yes, of course.

MADAM HELSETH.

But he looks scarcely the sort of man to bring into the sitting-room.

REBECCA.

Why, what does he look like, Madam Helseth?

MADAM HELSETH.

Well, he's not much to look at Miss, and that's a fact.

ROSMER.

Did he not give his name?

MADAM HELSETH.

Yes—I think he said his name was Hekman or something of the sort.

ROSMER.

I know nobody of that name.

MADAM HELSETH.

And then he said he was called Uldric too.

ROSMER.

[*In surprise.*] Ulric Hetman! Was that it?

MADAM HELSETH.

Yes, so it was—Hetman.

KROLL.

I've surely heard that name before——

REBECCA.

Wasn't that the name he used to write under—that strange being——

ROSMER.

[*To* KROLL.] It is Ulric Brendel's pseudonym.

KROLL.

That black sheep Ulric Brendel's—of course it is.

REBECCA.

Then he is still alive.

ROSMER.

I heard he had joined a company of strolling players.

KROLL.

When last *I* heard of him, he was in the House of Correction.

ROSMER.

Ask him to come in, Madam Helseth.

MADAM HELSETH.

Oh, very well. [*She goes out.*

KROLL.

Are you really going to let a man like that into your house?

ROSMER.

You know he was once my tutor.

KROLL.

Yes, I know he went and crammed your head full of revolutionary ideas, until your father showed him the door—with his horsewhip.

ROSMER.

[*With a touch of bitterness.*] Father was a martinet at home as well as in his regiment.

KROLL.

Thank him in his grave for that, my dear Rosmer.—Well?

MADAM HELSETH *opens the door on the right for* ULRIC BRENDEL, *and then withdraws, shutting the door behind him. He is a handsome man, with grey hair and beard; somewhat gaunt, but active and well set up. He is dressed like a common tramp; threadbare frock-coat; worn-out shoes; no shirt visible. He wears an old pair of black gloves, and carries a soft, greasy felt hat under his arm, and a walking-stick in his hand.*

ULRIC BRENDEL.

[*Hesitates at first, then goes quickly up to the* RECTOR, *and holds out his hand.*] Good evening, Johannes!

KROLL.

Excuse me——

BRENDEL.

Did you expect to see me again? And within these hated walls too?

KROLL.

Excuse me—— [*Pointing.*] T h e r e——

BRENDEL.

[*Turns.*] Right. There he is. Johannes—my boy—my best-beloved——!

ROSMER.

[*Takes his hand.*] My old teacher.

BRENDEL.

Notwithstanding certain painful memories, I could not pass by Rosmersholm without paying you a flying visit.

ROSMER.

You are heartily welcome here now. Be sure of that.

BRENDEL.

Ah, this charming lady——? [*Bows.*] Mrs. Rosmer, of course.

ROSMER.

Miss West.

BRENDEL.

A near relation, no doubt. And yonder unknown——? A brother of the cloth, I see.

ROSMER.

Rector Kroll.

BRENDEL.

Kroll? Kroll? Wait a bit?—Weren't you a student of philology in your young days?

KROLL.

Of course I was.

BRENDEL.

Why *Donnerwetter*, then I knew you!

KROLL.

Pardon me——

BRENDEL.

Weren't you——

KROLL.

Pardon me——

BRENDEL.

——one of those myrmidons of morality that got me turned out of the Debating Club?

KROLL.

Very likely. But I disclaim any closer acquaintanceship.

BRENDEL.

Well, well! *Nach Belieben, Herr Doctor.* It's all one to me. Ulric Brendel remains the man he is for all that.

REBECCA.

You are on your way into town, Mr. Brendel?

BRENDEL.

You have hit it, gracious lady. At certain intervals, I am constrained to strike a blow for existence. It goes against the grain; but—*enfin*—imperious necessity——

ROSMER.

Oh but, my dear Mr. Brendel, you must allow me to help you. In one way or another, I am sure——

BRENDEL.

Ha, such a proposal to me! Would you desecrate the bond that unites us? Never, Johannes, never!

ROSMER.

But what do you think of doing in town? Believe me, you won't find it easy to——

BRENDEL.

Leave that to me, my boy. The die is cast. Simple as I stand here before you, I am engaged in a comprehensive campaign—more comprehensive than all my previous excursions put together. [*To* RECTOR KROLL.] Dare I ask the Herr Professor—*unter uns*—have you a tolerably decent, reputable, and commodious Public Hall in your estimable city?

KROLL.

The hall of the Workmen's Society is the largest.

BRENDEL.

And has the Herr Professor any official influence in this doubtless most beneficent Society?

KROLL.

I have nothing to do with it.

REBECCA.

[*To* BRENDEL.] You should apply to Peter Mortensgård.

BRENDEL.

Pardon, madame—what sort of an idiot is he?

ROSMER.

What makes you take him for an idiot?

BRENDEL.

Can't I tell at once by the name that it belongs to a plebeian?

KROLL.

I did not expect that answer.

BRENDEL.

But I will conquer my reluctance. There is no alternative. When a man stands—as I do—at a turning-point in his career——. It is settled. I will approach this individual—will open personal negotiations——

ROSMER.

Are you really and seriously standing at a turning-point?

BRENDEL.

Surely my own boy knows that, stand he where he may, Ulric Brendel always stands really and seriously.—Yes, Johannes, I am going to put on a new man—to throw off the modest reserve I have hitherto maintained.

ROSMER.

How——?

BRENDEL.

I am about to take hold of life with a strong hand; to step forth; to assert myself. We live in a tempestuous, an equinoctial age.—I am about to lay my mite on the altar of Emancipation.

KROLL.

You too?

BRENDEL.

[*To them all.*] Is the local public at all familiar with my occasional writings?

KROLL.

No, I must candidly confess that——

REBECCA.

I have read several of them. My adopted father had them in his library.

BRENDEL.

Fair lady, then you have wasted your time. For, let me tell you, they are so much rubbish.

REBECCA.

Indeed!

BRENDEL.

What you have read, yes. My really important works no man or woman knows. No one—except myself.

REBECCA.

How does t h a t happen?

BRENDEL.

Because they are not written.

ROSMER.

But, my dear Mr. Brendel——

BRENDEL.

You know, my Johannes, that I am a bit of a Sybarite —a *Feinschmecker*. I have been so all my days. I like

to take my pleasures in solitude; for then I enjoy them doubly—tenfold. So, you see, when golden dreams descended and enwrapped me—when new, dizzy, far-reaching thoughts were born in me, and wafted me aloft on their sustaining pinions—I bodied them forth in poems, visions, pictures—in the rough, as it were, you understand.

ROSMER.

Yes, yes.

BRENDEL.

Oh, what pleasures, what intoxications I have enjoyed in my time! The mysterious bliss of creation—in the rough, as I said—applause, gratitude, renown, the wreath of bays—all these I have garnered with full hands quivering with joy. I have sated myself, in my secret thoughts, with a rapture—oh! so intense, so inebriating——!

KROLL.

H'm.

ROSMER.

But you have written nothing down?

BRENDEL.

Not a word. The soulless toil of the scrivener has always aroused a sickening aversion in me. And besides, why should I profane my own ideals, when I could enjoy them in their purity by myself? But now they shall be offered up. I assure you I feel like a mother who delivers her tender daughters into their bridegrooms' arms. But I will offer them up, none the less. I will sacrifice them on the altar of Emancipation. A series

of carefully elaborated lectures—over the whole country——!

REBECCA.

[*With animation.*] This is noble of you, Mr. Brendel! You are yielding up the dearest thing you possess.

ROSMER.

The only thing.

REBECCA.

[*Looking significantly at* ROSMER.] How many are there who do as much—who d a r e do as much?

ROSMER.

[*Returning the look.*] Who knows?

BRENDEL.

My audience is touched. That does my heart good—and steels my will. So now I will proceed to action. Stay—one thing more. [*To the* RECTOR.] Can you tell me, Herr Preceptor,—is there such a thing as a Temperance Society in the town? A Total Abstinence Society? I need scarcely ask.

KROLL.

Yes, there is. I am the president, at your service.

BRENDEL.

I saw it in your face! Well, it is by no means impossible that I may come to you and enrol myself as a member for a week.

KROLL.

Excuse me—we don't receive members by the week.

BRENDEL.

A la bonne heure, Herr Pedagogue. Ulric Brendel has never forced himself into that sort of Society. [*Turns.*] But I must not prolong my stay in this house, so rich in memories. I must get on to the town and select a suitable lodging. I presume there is a decent hotel in the place.

REBECCA.

Mayn't I offer you anything before you go?

BRENDEL.

Of what sort, gracious lady?

REBECCA.

A cup of tea, or——

BRENDEL.

I thank my bountiful hostess—but I am always loath to trespass on private hospitality. [*Waves his hand.*] Farewell, gentlefolks all! [*Goes towards the door, but turns again.*] Oh, by the way—Johannes—Pastor Rosmer—for the sake of our ancient friendship, will you do your former teacher a service?

ROSMER.

Yes, with all my heart.

BRENDEL.

Good. Then lend me—for a day or two—a starched shirt—with cuffs.

ROSMER.

Nothing else?

BRENDEL.

For you see I am travelling on foot—at present. My trunk is being sent after me.

ROSMER.

Quite so. But is there nothing else?

BRENDEL.

Well, do you know—perhaps you could spare me an oldish, well-worn summer overcoat.

ROSMER.

Yes, yes; certainly I can.

BRENDEL.

And if a respectable pair of boots happened to go along with the coat——

ROSMER.

That we can manage too. As soon as you let us know your address, we will send the things in.

BRENDEL.

Not on any account. Pray do not let me give you any trouble! I will take the bagatelles with me.

ROSMER.

As you please. Come upstairs with me then.

REBECCA.

Let m e go. Madam Helseth and I will see to it.

BRENDEL.

I cannot think of suffering this distinguished lady to——

REBECCA.

Oh, nonsense! Come along, Mr. Brendel.

[*She goes out to the right.*

ROSMER.

[*Detaining him.*] Tell me—is there nothing else I can do for you?

BRENDEL.

Upon my word, I know of nothing more. Well, yes, damn it all—now that I think of it——! Johannes, do you happen to have eight crowns in your pocket?

ROSMER.

Let me see. [*Opens his purse.*] Here are two ten-crown notes

BRENDEL.

Well well, never mind! I can take them. I can always get them changed in the town. Thanks in the meantime. Remember it was two tenners you lent me. Good-night my own dear boy. Good-night, respected Sir.

[*Goes out to the right.* ROSMER *takes leave of him, and shuts the door behind him.*

KROLL.

Merciful Heaven—so t h a t is the Ulric Brendel people once expected such great things of.

ROSMER.

[*Quietly.*] At least he has had the courage to live his life his own way. I don't think t h a t is such a small matter either.

KROLL.

What? A life like his! I almost believe he has it in him to turn your head afresh.

ROSMER.

Oh no. My mind is quite clear now, upon all points.

KROLL.

I wish I could believe it, my dear Rosmer. You are so terribly impressionable.

ROSMER.

Let us sit down. I want to talk to you.

KROLL.

Yes; let us. [*They seat themselves on the sofa.*

ROSMER.

[*After a slight pause.*] Don't you think we lead a pleasant and comfortable life here?

KROLL.

Yes, your life is pleasant and comfortable now—and peaceful. You have found yourself a home, Rosmer. And I have lost mine.

ROSMER.

My dear friend, don't say that. The wound will heal again in time.

KROLL.

Never; never. The barb will always rankle. Things can never be as they were.

ROSMER.

Listen to me, Kroll. We have been fast friends for many and many a year. Does it seem to you conceivable that our friendship should ever go to wreck?

KROLL.

I know of nothing in the world that could estrange us. What puts that into your head?

ROSMER.

You attach such paramount importance to uniformity of opinions and views.

KROLL.

No doubt; but we two are in practical agreement—at any rate on the great essential questions.

ROSMER.

[*In a low voice.*] No; not now.

KROLL.

[*Tries to spring up.*] What is this?

ROSMER.

[*Holding him.*] No you must sit still—I entreat you, Kroll.

KROLL.

What can this mean? I don't understand you. Speak plainly.

ROSMER.

A new summer has blossomed in my soul. I see with eyes grown young again. And so now I stand——

KROLL.

Where—where, Rosmer?

ROSMER.

Where your children stand.

KROLL.

You? You! Impossible! Where do you say you stand?

ROSMER.

On the same side as Laurits and Hilda.

KROLL.

[*Bows his head.*] An apostate! Johannes Rosmer an apostate!

ROSMER.

I should have felt so happy—so intensely happy, in what you call my apostasy. But nevertheless I suffered deeply; for I knew it would be a bitter sorrow to you.

KROLL.

Rosmer—Rosmer! I shall never get over this! [*Looks gloomily at him.*] To think that you too can find it in your heart to help on the work of corruption and ruin in this unhappy land.

ROSMER.

It is the work of emancipation I wish to help on.

KROLL.

Oh yes, I know. That is what both the tempters and their victims call it. But do you think there is any emancipation to be expected from the spirit that is now poisoning our whole social life?

ROSMER.

I am not in love with the spirit that is in the ascendant, nor with either of the contending parties. I will try to bring together men from both sides—as many as I can—and to unite them as closely as possible. I will devote my life and all my energies to this one thing—the creation of a true democracy in this country.

KROLL.

So you don't think we have democracy enough already! For my part it seems to me we are all in a fair way to be

dragged down into the mire, where hitherto only the mob have been able to thrive.

ROSMER.

That is just why I want to awaken the democracy to its true task.

KROLL.

What task?

ROSMER.

That of making all the people of this country noble——

KROLL.

All the people——?

ROSMER.

As many as possible, at any rate.

KROLL.

By what means?

ROSMER.

By freeing their minds and purifying their wills.

KROLL.

You are a dreamer, Rosmer. Will y o u free them? Will y o u purify them?

ROSMER.

No, my dear friend—I will only try to arouse them to their task. They themselves must accomplish it.

KROLL.

And you think they can?

ROSMER.

Yes.

KROLL.

By their own strength?

ROSMER.

Yes, precisely by their own strength. There is no other.

KROLL.

[*Rises.*] Is this becoming language for a priest?

ROSMER.

I am no longer a priest.

KROLL.

Well but—the faith of your fathers——?

ROSMER.

It is mine no more.

KROLL.

No more——!

ROSMER.

[*Rises.*] I have given it up. I had to give it up, Kroll.

KROLL.

[*Controlling his agitation.*] Oh, indeed—— Yes, yes, yes. I suppose one thing goes with another. Was this, then, your reason for leaving the Church?

ROSMER.

Yes. As soon as my mind was clear—as soon as I was quite certain that this was no passing attack of scepticism, but a conviction I neither could nor would shake off—then I at once left the Church.

KROLL.

So this has been your state of mind all this time! And we—your friends—have heard nothing of it. Rosmer—Rosmer—how could you hide the miserable truth from us!

ROSMER.

Because it seemed to me a matter that concerned myself alone. And besides, I did not wish to give you and my other friends any needless pain. I thought I might live on here, as before, quietly, serenely, happily. I wanted to read, to bury myself in all the studies that until then had been sealed books to me. I wanted to make myself thoroughly at home in the great world of truth and freedom that has been revealed to me.

KROLL.

Apostate! Every word proves it. But why, then, do you confess your secret apostasy after all? And why just at this time?

ROSMER.

You yourself have driven me to it, Kroll.

KROLL.

I? Have I driven you——?

ROSMER.

When I heard of your violence on the platform—when I read all the rancorous speeches you made—your bitter onslaughts on your opponents—the contemptuous invectives you heaped on them—oh Kroll, to think that you—y o u—could come to this!—then my duty stood imperatively before me. Men are growing evil in this struggle. Peace and joy and mutual forbearance must once more enter into our souls. That is why I now intend to step forward and openly avow myself for what I am. I, too, will try my strength. Could not you—from your side—help me in this, Kroll?

KROLL.

Never so long as I live will I make peace with the subversive forces in society.

ROSMER.

Then at least let us fight with honourable weapons—since fight we must.

KROLL.

Whoever is not with me in the essential things of life, him I no longer know. I owe him no consideration.

ROSMER.

Does that apply to me too?

KROLL.

It is you that have broken with me, Rosmer.

ROSMER.

Is this a breach then?

KROLL.

This! It is a breach with all who have hitherto been your friends. You must take the consequences.

REBECCA WEST *enters from the right, and opens the door wide.*

REBECCA.

There now; he is on his way to his great sacrifice. And now we can go to supper. Will you come in, Rector?

KROLL.

[*Takes up his hat.*] Good-night, Miss West. I have nothing more to do here.

REBECCA.

[*Eagerly.*] What is this? [*Shuts the door and comes forward.*] Have you spoken?

ROSMER.

He knows everything.

KROLL.

We will not let you go, Rosmer. We will force you to come back to us.

ROSMER.

I can never stand where I did.

KROLL.

We shall see. You are not the man to endure standing alone.

ROSMER.

I shall not be so completely alone after all.—There are two of us to bear the loneliness together.

KROLL.

Ah——! [*A suspicion appears in his face.*] That too! Beata's words——!

ROSMER.

Beata's——?

KROLL.

[*Shaking off the thought.*] No, no—that was vile. Forgive me.

ROSMER.

What? What do you mean?

KROLL.

Don't ask. Bah! Forgive me! Good-bye!
[*Goes towards the entrance door.*

ROSMER.

[*Follows him.*] Kroll! Our friendship must not end like this. I will come and see you to-morrow.

KROLL.

[*In the hall, turns.*] You shall never cross my threshold again. [*He takes up his stick and goes out.*

[ROSMER *stands for a moment in the doorway; then shuts the door and walks up to the table.*

ROSMER.

It does not matter, Rebecca. We will see it out, we two faithful friends—you[1] and I.

REBECCA.

What do you think he meant when he said "That was vile"?

ROSMER.

Don't trouble about that, dear. He himself didn't believe what was in his mind. To-morrow I will go and see him. Good-night!

REBECCA.

Are you going upstairs so early to-night? After this?

ROSMER.

To-night as usual. I feel so relieved, now it is over. You see—I am quite calm, Rebecca. Do you, too, take it calmly. Good-night!

REBECCA.

Good-night, dear friend! Sleep well!

[ROSMER *goes out by the hall door, his steps are heard ascending the staircase.*

[REBECCA *goes and pulls a bell-rope near the stove. Shortly after,* MADAM HELSETH *enters from the right.*

REBECCA.

You can take away the supper things, Madam Helseth. Mr. Rosmer doesn't want anything, and the Rector has gone home.

[1] From this point, and throughout when alone, Rosmer and Rebecca use the *du* of intimate friendship in speaking to each other.

MADAM HELSETH.

Has the Rector gone? What was the matter with him?

REBECCA.

[*Takes up her crochet work.*] He said he thought there was a heavy storm brewing——

MADAM HELSETH.

What a strange notion! There's not a cloud in the sky this evening.

REBECCA.

Let us hope he mayn't meet the White Horse! I'm afraid we shall soon be hearing something from the bogies now.

MADAM HELSETH.

Lord forgive you, Miss! Don't say such awful things.

REBECCA.

Well, well, well——

MADAM HELSETH.

[*Softly.*] Do you really think some one is to go soon, Miss?

REBECCA.

No; why should I think so? But there are so many sorts of white horses in this world, Madam Helseth.—Well, good-night. I shall go to my room now.

MADAM HELSETH.

Good-night, Miss.

[REBECCA *goes out to the right, with her crochet work.*

MADAM HELSETH.

[*Turns the lamp down, shaking her head and muttering to herself.*] Lord—Lord! That Miss West! The things she does say!

ACT SECOND

JOHANNES ROSMER'S *study. Entrance door on the left. At the back, a doorway with a curtain drawn aside, leading into* ROSMER'S *bedroom. On the right a window, and in front of it a writing-table covered with books and papers. Bookshelves and cases round the room. The furniture is simple. On the left, an old-fashioned sofa, with a table in front of it.*

JOHANNES ROSMER, *in an indoor jacket, is sitting in a high-backed chair at the writing-table. He is cutting and turning over the leaves of a pamphlet, and reading a little here and there.*

There is a knock at the door on the left.

ROSMER.

[*Without moving.*] Come in.

REBECCA WEST.

[*Enters, dressed in a morning gown.*] Good morning.

ROSMER.

[*Turning the leaves of the pamphlet.*] Good morning, dear. Do you want anything?

REBECCA.

I only wanted to hear if you had slept well.

ROSMER.

Oh I have had a beautiful, peaceful night. [*Turns.*] And you?

REBECCA.

Oh yes, thanks—towards morning——

ROSMER.

I don't know when I have felt so light-hearted as I do now. I am so glad I managed to speak out at last.

REBECCA.

Yes, it is a pity you remained silent so long, Rosmer.

ROSMER.

I don't understand myself how I could be such a coward

REBECCA.

It wasn't preciseiy cowardice——

ROSMER.

Oh yes, dear—when I think the thing out, I can see there was a touch of cowardice at the bottom of it.

REBECCA.

All the braver, then, to make the plunge at last. [*Sits on a chair at the writing-table, close to him.*] But now I want to tell you of something I have done—and you mustn't be vexed with me about it.

ROSMER.

Vexed? How can you think——?

REBECCA.

Well, it was perhaps rather indiscreet of me, but——

ROSMER.

Let me hear what it was.

REBECCA.

Yesterday evening, when Ulric Brendel was leaving—I gave him a note to Peter Mortensgård.

ROSMER.

[*A little doubtful.*] Why, my dear Rebecca—— Well, what did you say?

REBECCA.

I said that he would be doing you a service if he would look after that unfortunate creature a little, and help him in any way he could.

ROSMER.

Dear, you shouldn't have done that. You have only done Brendel harm. And Mortensgård is not a man I care to have anything to do with. You know of that old episode between us.

REBECCA.

But don't you think it would be as well to make it up with him again?

ROSMER.

I? With Mortensgård? In what way do you mean?

REBECCA.

Well, you know you can't feel absolutely secure now—after this breach with your old friends.

ROSMER.

[*Looks at her and shakes his head.*] Can you really believe that Kroll or any of the others would try to take revenge on me? That they would be capable of——?

REBECCA.

In the first heat of anger, dear——. No one can be sure. I think—after the way the Rector took it——

ROSMER.

Oh, you ought surely to know him better than that. Kroll is a gentleman, to the backbone. I am going into town this afternoon to talk to him. I will talk to them all. Oh you shall see how easily it will all go——

MADAM HELSETH *appears at the door on the left.*

REBECCA.

[*Rises.*] What is it, Madam Helseth?

MADAM HELSETH.

Rector Kroll is downstairs in the hall.

ROSMER.

[*Rises hastily.*] Kroll!

REBECCA.

The Rector! Is it possible——

MADAM HELSETH.

He wants to know if he may come upstairs, Mr. Rosmer.

ROSMER.

[*To* REBECCA.] What did I tell you?—Of course he may. [*Goes to the door and calls down the stairs.*] Come up, dear friend! I am delighted to see you.

[ROSMER *stands holding the door open.* MADAM HELSETH *goes out.* REBECCA *draws the curtain before the doorway at the back, and then begins arranging things in the room.*

RECTOR KROLL *enters, with his hat in his hand.*

ROSMER.

[*With quiet emotion.*] I knew it couldn't be the last time——

KROLL.

I see things to-day in quite a different light from yesterday.

ROSMER.

Ah yes, Kroll; I was sure you would, now that you have had time to reflect.

KROLL.

You misunderstand me completely. [*Lays his hat on the table beside the sofa.*] It is of the utmost importance that I should speak to you, alone.

ROSMER.

Why may not Miss West——?

REBECCA.

No no, Mr. Rosmer. I will go.

KROLL.

[*Looks at her from head to foot.*] And I must ask Miss West to excuse my coming at such an untimely hour—taking her unawares before she has had time to——

REBECCA.

[*Surprised.*] What do you mean? Do you see any harm in my wearing a morning gown about the house?

KROLL.

Heaven forbid! I know nothing of what may now be customary at Rosmersholm.

ROSMER.

Why, Kroll—you are not yourself to-day!

REBECCA.

Allow me to wish you good morning, Rector Kroll.
[*She goes out to the left.*

KROLL.

By your leave—— [*Sits on the sofa.*

ROSMER.

Yes, Kroll, sit down, and let us talk things out amicably.

[*He seats himself in a chair directly opposite to the* RECTOR.

KROLL.

I haven't closed an eye since yesterday. I have been lying thinking and thinking all night.

ROSMER.

And what do you say to things to-day?

KROLL.

It will be a long story, Rosmer. Let me begin with a sort of introduction. I can give you news of Ulric Brendel.

ROSMER.

Has he called on you?

KROLL.

No. He took up his quarters in a low public-house—in the lowest company of course—and drank and stood treat as long as he had any money. Then he began abusing the whole company as a set of disreputable blackguards—and so far he was quite right—whereupon they thrashed him and pitched him out into the gutter.

ROSMER.

So he is incorrigible after all.

KROLL.

He had pawned the coat too; but I am told that has been redeemed for him. Can you guess by whom?

ROSMER.

Perhaps by you?

KROLL.

No; by the distinguished Mr. Mortensgård.

ROSMER.

Ah, indeed.

KROLL.

I understand that Mr. Brendel's first visit was to the "idiot" and "plebeian."

ROSMER.

Well, it was lucky for him——

KROLL.

To be sure it was. [*Leans over the table towards* ROSMER.] And that brings me to a matter it is my duty to warn you about, for our old—for our former friendship's sake.

ROSMER.

My dear Kroll, what can t h a t be?

KROLL.

It is this: there are things going on behind your back in this house.

ROSMER.

How can you think so? Is it Reb—is it Miss West you are aiming at?

KROLL.

Precisely. I can quite understand it on her part. She has so long been accustomed to have everything her own way here. But nevertheless——

ROSMER.

My dear Kroll, you are utterly mistaken. She and I—we have no concealments from each other on any subject whatever.

KROLL.

Has she told you, then, that she has entered into correspondence with the editor of the "Beacon"?

ROSMER.

Oh, you are thinking of the few lines she sent by Ulric Brendel?

KROLL.

Then you h a v e found it out. And do you approve of her entering into relations with a scurrilous scribbler, who never lets a week pass without holding me up to ridicule, both as a schoolmaster and as a public man?

ROSMER.

My dear Kroll, I don't suppose that side of the matter ever entered her head. And besides, of course she has full liberty of action, just as I have.

KROLL.

Indeed? Ah, no doubt that follows from your new line of thought. For Miss West presumably shares your present standpoint?

ROSMER.

Yes, she does. We two have worked our way forward in faithful comradeship.

KROLL.

[*Looks at him and slowly shakes his head.*] Oh, you blind, deluded being!

ROSMER.

I? Why do you say that?

KROLL.

Because I dare not—I will not think the worst. No no, let me say my say out.—You really do value my friendship, Rosmer? And my respect too? Do you not?

ROSMER.

I surely need not answer that question.

KROLL.

Well, but there are other questions that do require an answer—a full explanation on your part.—Will you submit to a sort of investigation——?

ROSMER.

Investigation?

KROLL.

Yes; will you let me question you about certain things it may pain you to be reminded of? You see—this apostasy of yours—well, this emancipation, as you call it—is bound up with many other things that for your own sake you must explain to me.

ROSMER.

My dear Kroll, ask what questions you please. I have nothing to conceal.

KROLL.

Then tell me—what do you think was the real, the ultimate reason why Beata put an end to her life?

ROSMER.

Can you have any doubt on the subject? Or, rather, can you ask for reasons for what an unhappy, irresponsible invalid may do?

KROLL.

Are you certain that Beata was completely irresponsible for her actions? The doctors, at any rate, were by no means convinced of it.

ROSMER.

If the doctors had ever seen her as I have so often seen her, for days and nights together, they would have had no doubts.

KROLL.

I had no doubts either—then.

ROSMER.

Oh no, unhappily, there wasn't the smallest room for doubt. I have told you of her wild frenzies of passion—which she expected me to return. Oh, how they appalled me! And then her causeless, consuming self-reproaches during the last few years.

KROLL.

Yes, when she had learnt that she must remain childless all her life.

ROSMER.

Yes, just think of that! Such terrible, haunting agony of mind about a thing utterly beyond her control——! How could you call her responsible for her actions?

KROLL.

H'm——. Can you remember whether you had any books in the house at that time treating of the rationale of marriage—according to the "advanced" ideas of the day.

ROSMER.

I remember Miss West lending me a work of the kind. The Doctor left her his library, you know. But, my dear Kroll, you surely cannot suppose we were so reckless as to let my poor sick wife get hold of any such ideas? I can solemnly assure you that the fault was not ours. It was her own distempered brain that drove her into these wild aberrations.

KROLL.

One thing at any rate I can tell you; and that is, that poor, overstrung, tortured Beata put an end to her life in order that you might live happily—live freely, and—after your own heart.

ROSMER.

[*Starts half up from his chair.*] What do you mean by that?

KROLL.

Listen to me quietly, Rosmer; for now I can speak of it. In the last year of her life she came to me twice to pour forth all her anguish and despair.

ROSMER.

On this same subject?

KROLL.

No. The first time she came, it was to declare that you were on the road to perversion—that you were going to break with the faith of your fathers.

ROSMER.

[*Eagerly.*] What you say is impossible, Kroll! Absolutely impossible! You must be mistaken.

KROLL.

And why?

ROSMER.

Because while Beata was alive I was still wrestling with myself in doubt. And that fight I fought out alone and in utter silence. I don't think even Rebecca——

KROLL.

Rebecca?

ROSMER.

Oh well—Miss West. I call her Rebecca for convenience' sake.

KROLL.

So I have remarked.

ROSMER.

So it is inconceivable to me how Beata could have got hold of the idea. And why did she not speak to me myself about it? She never did—she never said a single word.

KROLL.

Poor creature—she begged and implored me to talk to you.

ROSMER.

And why did you not?

KROLL.

At that time I never for a moment doubted that she was out of her mind. Such an accusation against a man like you!—And then she came again—about a month later. This time she seemed outwardly calmer; but as she was going she said: "They may soon expect the White Horse at Rosmersholm now."

ROSMER.

Yes, yes. The White Horse—she often spoke of it.

KROLL.

And when I tried to divert her mind from such melancholy fancies, she only answered: "I have not long to live; for Johannes must marry Rebecca at once."

ROSMER.

[*Almost speechless.*] What do you say? I marry——?

KROLL.

That was on a Thursday afternoon——. On the Saturday evening she threw herself from the bridge into the mill-race.

ROSMER.

And you never warned us——!

KROLL.

You know very well how often she used to say that she felt her end was near.

ROSMER.

Yes, I know. But nevertheless—you s h o u l d have warned us!

KROLL.

I did think of it; but not till too late.

ROSMER.

But afterwards, why did you not——? Why have you said nothing about all this?

KROLL.

What good would it have done for me to come torturing and harassing you still further? I took all she said for mere wild, empty ravings—until yesterday evening.

ROSMER.

Then you have now changed your opinion?

KROLL.

Did not Beata see quite clearly when she declared you were about to desert the faith of your fathers?

ROSMER.

[*Looks fixedly, straight before him.*] I cannot understand it. It is the most incomprehensible thing in the world.

KROLL.

Incomprehensible or not—there it is. And now I ask you, Rosmer,—how much truth is there in her other accusation? The last one, I mean.

ROSMER.

Accusation? Was t h a t an accusation?

KROLL.

Perhaps you did not notice the way she worded it. She had to go, she said—why?

ROSMER.

In order that I might marry Rebecca——

KROLL.

These were not precisely her words. Beata used a different expression. She said: "I have not long to live; for Johannes m u s t marry Rebecca at o n c e."

ROSMER.

[*Looks at him for a moment; then rises.*] Now I understand you, Kroll.

KROLL.

And what then? What is your answer?

ROSMER.

[*Still quiet and self-restrained.*] To such an unheard-of——? The only fitting answer would be to point to the door.

KROLL.

[*Rises.*] Well and good.

ROSMER.

[*Stands in front of him.*] Listen to me. For more than a year—ever since Beata left us—Rebecca West and I have lived alone here at Rosmersholm. During all that time you have known of Beata's accusation against us. But I have never for a moment noticed that you disapproved of Rebecca's living in my house.

KROLL.

I did not know till yesterday evening that it was an unbelieving man who was living with an—emancipated woman.

ROSMER.

Ah——! Then you do not believe that purity of mind is to be found among the unbelieving and the emancipated? You do not believe that morality may be an instinctive law of their nature!

KROLL.

I have no great faith in the morality that is not founded on the teachings of the Church.

ROSMER.

And you mean this to apply to Rebecca and me? To the relation between us two——?

KROLL.

Not even out of consideration for you two can I depart from my opinion that there is no unfathomable gulf between free thought and—h'm——

ROSMER.

And what?

KROLL.

——and free love,—since you will have it.

ROSMER.

[*In a low voice.*] And you are not ashamed to say this to me? You, who have known me from my earliest youth!

KROLL.

For that very reason. I know how easily you are influenced by the people you associate with. And this Rebecca of yours—well, Miss West then—we really know little or nothing about her. In short, Rosmer—I will not give you up. And you—you must try to save yourself in time.

ROSMER.

Save myself? How——?

MADAM HELSETH *peeps in at the door on the left.*

ROSMER.

What do you want?

MADAM HELSETH.

I wanted to ask Miss West to step downstairs.

ROSMER.

Miss West is not up here.

MADAM HELSETH.

Isn't she? [*Looks round the room.*] Well, that's strange. [*She goes.*

ROSMER.

You were saying——?

KROLL.

Listen to me. I am not going to inquire too closely into the secret history of what went on here in Beata's lifetime—and may still be going on. I know that your marriage was a most unhappy one; and I suppose that must be taken as some sort of excuse——

ROSMER.

Oh, how little you really know me——!

KROLL.

Don't interrupt me. What I mean is this: if your present mode of life with Miss West is to continue, it is absolutely necessary that the change of views—the unhappy backsliding—brought about by her evil influence, should be hushed up. Let me speak! Let me speak! I say, if the worst comes to the worst, in Heaven's name think and believe whatever you like about everything under the sun. But you must keep your views to yourself. These things are purely personal matters, after all. There is no need to proclaim them from the housetops.

ROSMER.

I feel it an absolute necessity to get out of a false and equivocal position.

KROLL.

But you have a duty towards the traditions of your race, Rosmer! Remember that! Rosmersholm has, so to speak, radiated morality and order from time immemorial—yes, and respectful conformity to all that is accepted and sanctioned by the best people. The whole district has taken its stamp from Rosmersholm. It would lead to deplorable, irremediable confusion if it were known that you had broken with what I may call the hereditary idea of the house of Rosmer.

ROSMER.

My dear Kroll, I cannot see the matter in that light. I look upon it as my imperative duty to spread a little light and gladness here, where the Rosmer family has from generation to generation been a centre of darkness and oppression.

KROLL.

[*Looks at him severely.*] Yes, that would be a worthy life-work for the last of your race! No, Rosmer; let such things alone; you are the last man for such a task. You were born to be a quiet student.

ROSMER.

Perhaps so. But for once in a way I mean to bear my part in the battle of life.

KROLL.

And do you know what that battle of life will mean for you? It will mean a life-and-death struggle with all your friends.

ROSMER.

[*Quietly.*] They cannot all be such fanatics as you.

KROLL.

You are a credulous creature, Rosmer. An inexperienced creature too. You have no conception of the overwhelming storm that will burst upon you.

MADAM HELSETH *looks in at the door on the left.*

MADAM HELSETH.

Miss West wants to know——

ROSMER.

What is it?

MADAM HELSETH.

There's a man downstairs wanting to have a word with the Pastor.

ROSMER.

Is it the man who was here yesterday evening?

MADAM HELSETH.

No, it's that Mortensgård.

ROSMER.

Mortensgård?

KROLL.

Aha! So it has come to this, has it?—Already!

ROSMER.

What does he want with me? Why didn't you send him away?

MADAM HELSETH.

Miss West said I was to ask if he might come upstairs.

ROSMER.

Tell him I'm engaged——

KROLL.

[*To* MADAM HELSETH.] Let him come up, Madam Helseth. [MADAM HELSETH *goes. He takes up his hat.*] I retire from the field—for the moment. But the main battle has yet to be fought.

ROSMER.

On my honour, Kroll—I have nothing whatever to do with Mortensgård.

KROLL.

I do not believe you. On no subject and in no relation whatever will I henceforth believe you. It is war to the knife now. We will try whether we cannot disarm you.

ROSMER.

Oh Kroll—how low—how very low you have sunk!

KROLL.

I? And y o u think you have the right to say that to me! Remember Beata!

ROSMER.

Still harping upon t h a t?

KROLL.

No. You must solve the enigma of the mill-race according to your own conscience—if you have anything of the sort left.

PETER MORTENSGÅRD *enters softly and quietly from the left. He is a small, wiry man with thin reddish hair and beard.*

KROLL.

[*With a look of hatred.*] Ah, here we have the "Beacon"—burning at Rosmersholm! [*Buttons his coat.*] Well, now I can no longer hesitate what course to steer.

MORTENSGÅRD.

[*Deferentially.*] The "Beacon" may always be relied upon to light the Rector home.

KROLL.

Yes; you have long shown your goodwill. To be sure there's a commandment about bearing false witness against your neighbour——

MORTENSGÅRD.

Rector Kroll need not instruct me in the commandments.

KROLL.

Not even in the seventh?

ROSMER.

Kroll——!

MORTENSGÅRD.

If I needed instruction, it would rather be the Pastor's business.

KROLL.

[*With covert sarcasm.*] The Pastor's? Oh yes, unquestionably Pastor Rosmer is the man for t h a t.—Good luck to your conference, gentlemen!

[*Goes out and slams the door behind him.*

ROSMER.

[*Keeps his eyes fixed on the closed door and says to himself.*] Well, well—so be it then. [*Turns.*] Will you be good enough to tell me, Mr. Mortensgård, what brings you out here to me?

MORTENSGÅRD.

It was really Miss West I came to see. I wanted to thank her for the friendly note I received from her yesterday.

ROSMER.

I know she wrote to you. Have you seen her then?

MORTENSGÅRD.

Yes, for a short time. [*Smiles slightly.*] I hear there has been a certain change of views out here at Rosmersholm.

ROSMER.

My views are altered in many respects. I might almost say in all.

MORTENSGÅRD.

So Miss West told me; and that's why she thought I had better come up and talk things over with the Pastor.

ROSMER.

What things, Mr. Mortensgård?

MORTENSGÅRD.

May I announce in the "Beacon" that there has been a change in your views—that you have joined the party of freedom and progress?

ROSMER.

Certainly you may. In fact, I beg you to make the announcement.

MORTENSGÅRD.

Then it shall appear in to-morrow's paper. It will cause a great sensation when it's known that Pastor Rosmer of Rosmersholm is prepared to take up arms for the cause of light, in t h a t sense too.

ROSMER.

I don't quite understand you.

MORTENSGÅRD.

I mean that the moral position of our party is greatly strengthened whenever we gain an adherent of serious, Christian principles.

ROSMER.

[*With some surprise.*] Then you do not know——? Did not Miss West tell you that too?

MORTENSGÅRD.

What, Pastor Rosmer? Miss West was in a great hurry. She said I was to go upstairs and hear the rest from yourself.

ROSMER.

Well, in that case I may tell you that I have emancipated myself entirely, and on every side. I have broken with all the dogmas of the Church. Henceforth they are nothing to me.

MORTENSGÅRD.

[*Looks at him in amazement.*] Well—if the skies were to fall I couldn't be more——! Pastor Rosmer himself announces——.

ROSMER.

Yes, I now stand where you have stood for many years. That, too, you may announce in the "Beacon" to-morrow.

MORTENSGÅRD.

That too? No, my dear Pastor—excuse me—I don't think it would be wise to touch on that side of the matter.

ROSMER.

Not touch on it?

MORTENSGÅRD.

Not at present, I mean.

ROSMER.

I don't understand——

MORTENSGÅRD.

Well you see, Pastor Rosmer—you probably don't know the ins and outs of things so well as I do. But, since you have come over to the party of freedom—and, as I hear from Miss West, you intend to take an active share in the movement—I presume you would like to be of as much service as possible, both to the cause in general and to this particular agitation.

ROSMER.

Yes, that is my earnest wish.

MORTENSGÅRD.

Good. But now I must tell you, Pastor Rosmer, that if you openly declare your defection from the Church, you tie your own hands at the very outset.

ROSMER.

Do you think so?

MORTENSGÅRD.

Yes; believe me, you won't be able to do much for the cause, in this part of the country at any rate. And besides—we have plenty of free-thinkers already, Pastor Rosmer—I might almost say too many. What the party requires, is a Christian element—something that every one must respect. T h a t is what we are sadly in need of. And therefore I advise you to keep your own counsel about what doesn't concern the public. That's my view of the matter, at least.

Copyright by Miltet & Co., Christiania

Molde: The scene of Rosmersholm is laid in this part of Norway

ROSMER.

I understand. Then if I openly confess my apostasy, you dare not have anything to do with me?

MORTENSGÅRD.

[*Shaking his head.*] I scarcely like to risk it, Pastor Rosmer. I have made it a rule for some time past not to support any one or anything that is actively opposed to the Church.

ROSMER.

Then you have yourself returned to the Church?

MORTENSGÅRD.

That concerns no one but myself.

ROSMER.

Ah, so that is it. Now I understand you.

MORTENSGÅRD.

Pastor Rosmer—you ought to remember that I—I in particular—have not full liberty of action.

ROSMER.

What hampers you?

MORTENSGÅRD.

The fact that I am a marked man.

ROSMER.

Ah—indeed.

MORTENSGÅRD.

A marked man, Pastor Rosmer. You, above all men, should remember that; for I have chiefly you to thank for the scandal that branded me.

ROSMER.

If I had then stood where I stand now, I should have dealt more gently with your offence.

MORTENSGÅRD.

That I don't doubt. But it is too late now. You have branded me once for all—branded me for life. I suppose you can scarcely understand what that means. But now you may perhaps come to feel the smart of it yourself, Pastor Rosmer.

ROSMER.

I?

MORTENSGÅRD.

Yes. You surely don't suppose that Rector Kroll and his set will ever forgive a desertion like yours? I hear the "County News" is going to be very savage in future. You too may find yourself a marked man before long.

ROSMER.

In personal matters, Mr. Mortensgård, I feel myself secure from attack. My life is beyond reproach.

MORTENSGÅRD.

[*With a sly smile.*] That's a large word, Mr. Rosmer.

ROSMER.

Perhaps; but I have a right to use it.

MORTENSGÅRD.

Even if you were to scrutinise your conduct as closely as you once scrutinised mine?

ROSMER.

Your tone is very curious. What are you hinting at? Anything definite?

MORTENSGÅRD.

Yes, something definite. Only one thing. But t h a t might be bad enough, if malicious opponents got wind of it.

ROSMER.

Will you have the kindness to let me hear what it is?

MORTENSGÅRD.

Cannot you guess for yourself, Pastor?

ROSMER.

No, certainly not. I have not the slightest idea.

MORTENSGÅRD.

Well well, I suppose I must come out with it then.—I have in my possession a strange letter, dated from Rosmersholm.

ROSMER.

Miss West's letter, do you mean? Is it so strange?

MORTENSGÅRD.

No, there's nothing strange about that. But I once received another letter from this house.

ROSMER.

Also from Miss West?

MORTENSGÅRD.

No, Mr. Rosmer.

ROSMER.

Well then, from whom? From whom?

MORTENSGÅRD.

From the late Mrs. Rosmer.

ROSMER.

From my wife! You received a letter from my wife!

MORTENSGÅRD.

I did.

ROSMER.

When?

MORTENSGÅRD.

Towards the close of Mrs. Rosmer's life. Perhaps about a year and a half ago. That is the letter I call strange.

ROSMER.

I suppose you know that my wife's mind was affected at that time.

MORTENSGÅRD.

Yes; I know many people thought so. But I don't think there was anything in the letter to show it. When I call it strange, I mean in another sense.

ROSMER.

And what in the world did my poor wife take it into her head to write to y o u about?

MORTENSGÅRD.

I have the letter at home. She begins to the effect that she is living in great anxiety and fear; there are so many malicious people about here, she says; and they think of nothing but causing you trouble and injury.

ROSMER.

Me?

MORTENSGÅRD.

Yes, so she says. And then comes the strangest part of all. Shall I go on, Pastor Rosmer?

ROSMER.

Assuredly! Tell me everything, without reserve.

MORTENSGÅRD.

The deceased lady begs and implores me to be magnanimous. She knows, she says, that it was her husband that had me dismissed from my post as teacher; and she conjures me by all that's sacred not to avenge myself.

LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

ROSMER.

How did she suppose you could avenge yourself?

MORTENSGÅRD.

The letter says that if I should hear rumours of sinful doings at Rosmersholm, I am not to believe them; they are only spread abroad by wicked people who wish to make you unhappy.

ROSMER.

Is all that in the letter?

MORTENSGÅRD.

You may read it for yourself, sir, when you please.

ROSMER.

But I don't understand——! What did she imagine the rumours to be about?

MORTENSGÅRD.

Firstly, that the Pastor had deserted the faith of his fathers. Your wife denied that absolutely—then. And next—h'm——

ROSMER.

Next?

MORTENSGÅRD.

Well, next she writes—rather confusedly—that she knows nothing of any sinful intrigue at Rosmersholm; that she has never been wronged in any way. And if any such rumours should get about, she implores me to say nothing of the matter in the "Beacon."

ROSMER.

Is no name mentioned?

MORTENSGÅRD.

None.

ROSMER.

Who brought you the letter?

MORTENSGÅRD.

I have promised not to say. It was handed to me one evening, at dusk.

ROSMER.

If you had made inquiries at the time, you would have learnt that my poor unhappy wife was not fully accountable for her actions.

MORTENSGÅRD.

I did make inquiries, Pastor Rosmer. But I must say that was not the impression I received.

ROSMER.

Was it not?—But what is your precise reason for telling me now about this incomprehensible old letter?

MORTENSGÅRD.

To impress on you the necessity for extreme prudence, Pastor Rosmer.

ROSMER.

In my life, do you mean?

MORTENSGÅRD.

Yes. You must remember that from to-day you have ceased to be a neutral.

ROSMER.

Then you have quite made up your mind that I must have something to conceal?

MORTENSGÅRD.

I don't know why an emancipated man should refrain from living his life out as fully as possible. But, as I said before, be exceedingly cautious in future. If anything should get abroad that conflicts with current prejudices, you may be sure the whole liberal movement will have to suffer for it.—Good-bye, Pastor Rosmer.

ROSMER.

Good-bye.

MORTENSGÅRD.

I shall go straight to the office and have the great news put into the "Beacon."

ROSMER.

Yes; omit nothing.

MORTENSGÅRD.

I shall omit nothing that the public need know.

[*He bows and goes out.* ROSMER *remains standing in the doorway while he goes down the stairs. The outer door is heard to close.*

ROSMER.

[*In the doorway, calls softly.*] Rebecca! Re—— H'm. [*Aloud.*] Madam Helseth,—is Miss West not there?

MADAM HELSETH.

[*From the hall.*] No, Pastor Rosmer, she's not here.

[*The curtain at the back is drawn aside.* REBECCA *appears in the doorway.*

REBECCA.

Rosmer!

ROSMER.

[*Turns.*] What! Were you in my room? My dear, what were you doing there?

REBECCA.

[*Goes up to him.*] I was listening.

ROSMER.

Oh, Rebecca, how could you?

REBECCA.

I could not help it. He said it so hatefully—that about my morning gown——

ROSMER.

Then you were there when Kroll——?

REBECCA.

Yes. I wanted to know what was lurking in his mind.

ROSMER.

I would have told you.

REBECCA.

You would scarcely have told me all. And certainly not in his own words.

ROSMER.

Did you hear everything, then?

REBECCA.

Nearly everything, I think. I had to go downstairs for a moment when Mortensgård came.

ROSMER.

And then you came back again——?

REBECCA.

Don't be vexed with me, dear friend!

ROSMER.

Do whatever you think right. You are mistress of your own actions.—But what do you say to all this, Rebecca——? Oh, I seem never to have needed you so much before!

REBECCA.

Both you and I have been prepared for what must happen some time.

ROSMER.

No, no—not for this.

REBECCA.

Not for this?

ROSMER.

I knew well enough that sooner or later our beautiful, pure friendship might be misinterpreted and soiled. Not by Kroll—I could never have believed such a thing of him—but by all those other people with the coarse souls and the ignoble eyes. Oh yes—I had reason enough for keeping our alliance so jealously concealed. It was a dangerous secret.

REBECCA.

Oh, why should we care what all those people think! We know in our own hearts that we are blameless.

ROSMER.

Blameless? I? Yes, I thought so—till to-day. But now—now, Rebecca——?

REBECCA.

Well, what now?

ROSMER.

How am I to explain Beata's terrible accusation?

REBECCA.

[*Vehemently.*] Oh, don't speak of Beata! Don't think of Beata any more! You were just beginning to shake off the hold she has upon you, even in the grave.

ROSMER.

Since I have heard all this, she seems, in a ghastly sort of way, to be alive again.

REBECCA.

Oh no—not that, Rosmer! Not that!

ROSMER.

Yes, I tell you. We must try to get to the bottom of this. What can possibly have led her to misinterpret things so fatally?

REBECCA.

You are surely not beginning to doubt that she was on the very verge of insanity?

ROSMER.

Oh yes—that is just what I can't feel quite certain of any longer. And besides—even if she was——

REBECCA.

If she was? Well, what then?

ROSMER.

I mean—where are we to look for the determining cause that drove her morbid spirit over the border-line of madness?

REBECCA.

Oh, why brood over problems no one can solve?

ROSMER.

I cannot help it, Rebecca. I cannot shake off these gnawing doubts, however much I may wish to.

REBECCA.

But it may become dangerous—this eternal dwelling upon one miserable subject.

ROSMER.

[*Walks about restlessly, in thought.*] I must have betrayed myself in one way or another. She must have noticed how happy I began to feel from the time y o u came to us.

REBECCA.

Yes but, dear, even if she did——?

ROSMER.

Be sure it didn't escape her that we read the same books—that the interest of discussing all the new ideas drew us together. Yet I cannot understand it! I was so careful to spare her. As I look back, it seems to me I made it the business of my life to keep her in ignorance of all our interests. Did I not, Rebecca?

REBECCA.

Yes, yes; certainly you did

ROSMER.

And you too. And yet——! Oh, it's terrible to think of! She must have gone about here—full of her morbid passion—saying never a word—watching us—noting everything—and misinterpreting everything.

REBECCA.

[*Pressing her hands together.*] Oh, I should never have come to Rosmersholm!

ROSMER.

To think of all she must have suffered in silence! All the foulness her sick brain must have conjured up around us! Did she never say anything to you to put you at all on the alert?

REBECCA.

[*As if startled.*] To me! Do you think I should have stayed a day longer if she had?

ROSMER.

No, no, of course not.—Oh, what a battle she must have fought! And alone too, Rebecca; desperate and quite alone!—and then, at last, that heart-breaking, accusing victory—in the mill-race.

[*Throws himself into the chair by the writing-table, with his elbows on the table and his face in his hands.*

REBECCA.

[*Approaches him cautiously from behind.*] Listen, Rosmer. If it were in your power to call Beata back—to you—to Rosmersholm—would you do it?

ROSMER.

Oh, how do I know what I would or would not do? I can think of nothing but this one thing—that cannot be recalled.

REBECCA.

You were just beginning to live, Rosmer. You had begun. You had freed yourself—on every side. You felt so buoyant and happy——

ROSMER.

Oh yes—I did indeed.—And now this crushing blow falls on me.

REBECCA.

[*Behind him, rests her arms on the chair-back.*] How beautiful it was when we sat in the twilight, in the room downstairs, helping each other to lay out our new life-plans! You were to set resolutely to work in the world—the living world of to-day, as you said. You were to go as a messenger of emancipation from home to home; to win over minds and wills; to create noble-men around you in wider and wider circles. Noble-men.

ROSMER.

Happy noble-men.

REBECCA.

Yes—happy.

ROSMER.

For it is happiness that ennobles, Rebecca.

REBECCA.

Should you not say—sorrow as well? A great sorrow?

ROSMER.

Yes—if one can get through it—over it—away from it.

REBECCA.

T h a t is what you must do.

ROSMER.

[*Shakes his head gloomily.*] I shall never get over this —wholly. There will always be a doubt—a question left. I can never again know that luxury of the soul which makes life so marvellously sweet to live!

REBECCA.

[*Bends over his chair-back, and says more softly:*] What is it you mean, Rosmer?

ROSMER.

[*Looking up at her.*] Peaceful, happy innocence.

REBECCA.

[*Recoils a step.*] Yes. Innocence. [*A short pause.*

ROSMER.

[*With his elbow on the table, leaning his head on his hand, and looking straight before him.*] And what extraordinary penetration she showed! How systematically she put all this together! First she begins to doubt my orthodoxy——How c o u l d that occur to her? But it did occur to her; and then it grew to be a certainty. And then—yes, then of course it was easy for her to think all the rest possible. [*Sits up in his chair and runs his hands through his hair.*] Oh, all these horrible imaginings! I shall never get rid of them. I feel it. I know it. At any moment they will come rushing in upon me, and bring back the thought of the dead!

REBECCA.

Like the White Horse of Rosmersholm.

ROSMER.

Yes, like that. Rushing forth in the darkness—in the silence.

REBECCA.

And because of this miserable figment of the brain, you will let slip the hold you were beginning to take upon the living world?

ROSMER.

You may well think it hard. Yes, hard, Rebecca. But I have no choice. How could I ever leave t h i s behind me?

REBECCA.

[*Behind his chair.*] By entering into new relations.

ROSMER.

[*Surprised, looks up.*] New relations?

REBECCA.

Yes, new relations to the outside world. Live, work, act. Don't sit here brooding and groping among insoluble enigmas.

ROSMER.

[*Rises.*] New relations? [*Walks across the floor, stops at the door and then comes back.*] One question occurs to me. Has it not occurred to you too, Rebecca?

REBECCA.

[*Drawing breath with difficulty.*] Let me—hear—what it is?

ROSMER.

What form do you think o u r relations will take after to-day?

REBECCA.

I believe our friendship will endure—come what may.

ROSMER.

That is not exactly what I meant. The thing that first brought us together, and that unites us so closely—our common faith in a pure comradeship between man and woman——

REBECCA.

Yes, yes—what of that?

ROSMER.

I mean, that such a relation—as this of ours—does it not presuppose a quiet, happy, peaceful life——?

REBECCA.

What then?

ROSMER.

But the life I must now look forward to is one of struggle and unrest and strong agitations. For I w i l l live my life, Rebecca! I will not be crushed to earth by horrible possibilities. I will not have my course of life forced upon me, either by the living or by—any one else.

REBECCA.

No, no—do not! Be an absolutely free man, Rosmer!

ROSMER.

But can you not guess what is in my mind? Do you not know? Don't you see how I can best shake off all gnawing memories—all the unhappy past?

REBECCA.

How?

ROSMER.

By opposing to it a new, a living reality.

REBECCA.

[*Feeling for the chair-back.*] A living—— What do you mean?

ROSMER.

[*Comes nearer.*] Rebecca—if I were to ask you—will you be my second wife?

REBECCA.

[*For a moment speechless, then cries out with joy.*] Your wife! Your——! I!

ROSMER.

Come; let us try it. We two will be one. The place of the dead must stand empty no longer.

REBECCA.

I—in Beata's place——!

ROSMER.

Then she will be out of the saga—completely—for ever and ever.

REBECCA.

[*Softly, trembling.*] Do you believe that, Rosmer?

ROSMER.

It must be so! It m u s t ! I cannot—I will not go through life with a dead body on my back. Help me to cast it off, Rebecca. And let us stifle all memories in freedom, in joy, in passion. You shall be to me the only wife I have ever had.

REBECCA.

[*With self-command.*] Never speak of this again. I will never be your wife.

ROSMER.

What! Never! Do you not think you could come to love me? Is there not already a strain of love in our friendship?

REBECCA.

[*Puts her hands over her ears as if in terror.*] Don't speak so, Rosmer! Don't say such things!

ROSMER.

[*Seizes her arm.*] Yes, yes—there is a growing promise in our relation. Oh, I can see that you feel it too. Do you not, Rebecca?

REBECCA.

[*Once more firm and calm.*] Listen to me. I tell you—if you persist in this, I will go away from Rosmersholm.

ROSMER.

Go away! You! You cannot. It is impossible.

REBECCA.

It is still more impossible that I should be your wife. Never in this world can I marry you.

ROSMER.

[*Looks at her in surprise.*] You say "can"; and you say it so strangely. Why can you not?

REBECCA.

[*Seizes both his hands.*] Dear friend—both for your own sake and for mine—do not ask why. [*Lets go his hands.*] Do not, Rosmer.

[*Goes towards the door on the left.*

ROSMER.

Henceforth I can think of nothing but that one question—why?

REBECCA.

[*Turns and looks at him.*] Then it is all over.

ROSMER.

Between you and me?

REBECCA.

Yes.

ROSMER.

It will never be all over between us two. You will never leave Rosmersholm.

REBECCA.

[*With her hand on the door-handle.*] No, perhaps I shall not. But if you ask me again—it is all over.

ROSMER.

All over? How——?

REBECCA.

For then I will go the way that Beata went. Now you know it, Rosmer.

ROSMER.

Rebecca——?

REBECCA.

[*In the doorway, nods slowly.*] Now you know it.
[*She goes out.*

ROSMER.

[*Stares, thunderstruck, at the door, and says to himself.*] What—is—this?

ACT THIRD

The sitting-room at Rosmersholm. The window and the entrance door are open. The sun is shining outside. Forenoon.

REBECCA WEST, *dressed as in the first Act, stands at the window, watering and arranging the flowers. Her crochet-work lies in the arm-chair.* MADAM HELSETH *is moving about, dusting the furniture with a feather-brush.*

REBECCA.

[*After a short silence.*] I can't understand the Pastor remaining so long upstairs to-day.

MADAM HELSETH.

Oh, he often does that. But he'll soon be down now, I should think.

REBECCA.

Have you seen anything of him?

MADAM HELSETH.

I caught a glimpse of him when I went upstairs with his coffee. He was in his bedroom, dressing.

REBECCA.

I asked because he was a little out of sorts yesterday.

MADAM HELSETH.

He didn't look well. I wonder if there isn't something amiss between him and his brother-in-law.

REBECCA.

What do you think it can be?

MADAM HELSETH.

I couldn't say. Perhaps it's that Mortensgård that has been setting them against each other.

REBECCA.

Likely enough.—Do you know anything of this Peter Mortensgård?

MADAM HELSETH.

No indeed. How could you think so, Miss? A fellow like him.

REBECCA.

Do you mean because he edits such a low paper?

MADAM HELSETH.

Oh, it's not only t h a t.—You must have heard, Miss that he had a child by a marrried woman that had been deserted by her husband?

REBECCA.

Yes, I have heard of it. But it must have been long before I came here.

MADAM HELSETH.

It's true he was very young at the time; and she should have known better. He wanted to marry her too; but of course he couldn't do that. And I don't say he hasn't paid dear for it.—But, good Lord, Mortensgård has got on in the world since those days. There's a many people run after h i m now.

REBECCA.

Yes, most of the poor people bring their affairs to him when they're in any trouble.

MADAM HELSETH.

Ah, and others too, perhaps, besides the poor folk——

REBECCA.

[*Looks at her furtively.*] Indeed.

MADAM HELSETH.

[*By the sofa, dusting away vigorously.*] Perhaps the last people you would think likely to, Miss.

REBECCA.

[*Busy with the flowers.*] Come now, that's only an idea of yours, Madam Helseth. You can't be s u r e of what you're saying.

MADAM HELSETH.

You think I can't, Miss? But I can tell you I am. Why—if you m u s t know it—I once took a letter in to Mortensgård myself.

REBECCA.

[*Turning.*] No—did you?

MADAM HELSETH.

Yes, indeed I did. And a letter that was written here at Rosmersholm too.

REBECCA.

Really, Madam Helseth?

MADAM HELSETH.

Yes, that it was. And it was on fine paper, and there was a fine red seal on it too.

REBECCA.

And it was given to y o u to deliver? Then, my dear Madam Helseth, it's not difficult to guess who wrote it.

MADAM HELSETH.

Well?

REBECCA.

It must have been something that poor Mrs. Rosmer, in her morbid state——

MADAM HELSETH.

It's you that say t h a t, Miss, not me.

REBECCA.

But what was in the letter? Oh, I forgot——y o u can't know that.

MADAM HELSETH.

H'm; what if I did know it, all the same?

REBECCA.

Did she tell you what she was writing about?

MADAM HELSETH.

No, she didn't exactly do that. But Mortensgård, when he'd read it, he began questioning me backwards and forwards and up and down, so that I soon guessed what was in it.

REBECCA.

Then what do you think it was? Oh my dear, good Madam Helseth, do tell me.

MADAM HELSETH.

Oh no, Miss. Not for the whole world.

REBECCA.

Oh you can surely tell m e. We two are such good friends.

MADAM HELSETH.

Lord preserve me from telling you anything about t h a t, Miss. I can only tell you that it was something horrible that they'd got the poor sick lady to believe.

REBECCA.

Who had got her to believe it?

MADAM HELSETH.

Wicked people, Miss West. Wicked people.

REBECCA.

Wicked——?

MADAM HELSETH.

Yes, I say it again. They must have been real wicked people.

REBECCA.

And who do you think it could have been?

MADAM HELSETH.

Oh, I know well enough what to think. But Lord forbid *I* should say anything. To be sure there's a certain lady in the town—h'm!

REBECCA.

I can see that you mean Mrs. Kroll.

MADAM HELSETH.

Ah, she's a fine one, she is. She has always been the great lady with me. And she's never had any too much love for you neither.

REBECCA.

Do you think Mrs. Rosmer was in her right mind when she wrote that letter to Mortensgård?

MADAM HELSETH.

It's a queer thing a person's mind, Miss. Clean out of her mind I don't think she was.

REBECCA.

But she seemed to go distracted when she learned that she must always be childless. It was t h a t that unsettled her reason.

MADAM HELSETH.

Yes, poor lady, t h a t was a dreadful blow to her.

REBECCA.

[*Takes up her crochet and sits in a chair by the window.*] But after all—don't you think it was a good thing for the Pastor, Madam Helseth?

MADAM HELSETH.

What, Miss?

REBECCA.

That there were no children. Don't you think so?

MADAM HELSETH.

H'm, I'm sure I don't know what to say about that.

REBECCA.

Oh yes, believe me, it was fortunate for him. Pastor Rosmer is not the man to have crying children about his house.

MADAM HELSETH.

Ah, Miss, little children don't cry at Rosmersholm.

REBECCA.

[*Looks at her.*] Don't cry?

MADAM HELSETH.

No. As long as people can remember, children have never been known to cry in this house.

REBECCA.

That's very strange.

MADAM HELSETH.

Yes; isn't it? But it runs in the family. And then there's another strange thing. When they grow up, they never laugh. Never, as long as they live.

REBECCA.

Why, how extraordinary——

MADAM HELSETH.

Have you ever once heard or seen the Pastor laugh, Miss?

REBECCA.

No—now that I think of it, I almost believe you are right. But I don't think any one laughs much in this part of the country.

MADAM HELSETH.

No, they don't. They say it began at Rosmersholm. And then I suppose it spread round about, as if it was catching-like.

REBECCA.

You are a very wise woman, Madam Helseth.

MADAM HELSETH.

Oh, Miss, you mustn't sit there and make fun of me. [*Listens.*] Hush, hush—here's the Pastor coming down. He doesn't like to see dusting going on.

[*She goes out to the right.*

JOHANNES ROSMER, *with his hat and stick in his hand, enters from the hall.*

ROSMER.

Good morning, Rebecca.

REBECCA.

Good morning, dear. [*A moment after—crocheting.*] Are you going out?

ROSMER.

Yes.

REBECCA.

It's a beautiful day.

ROSMER.

You didn't look in on me this morning.

REBECCA.

No, I didn't. Not to-day.

ROSMER.

Do you not intend to in future?

REBECCA.

Oh, I don't know yet, dear.

ROSMER.

Has anything come for me?

REBECCA.

The "County News" has come.

ROSMER.

The "County News"?

REBECCA.

There it is on the table.

ROSMER.

[*Puts down his hat and stick.*] Is there anything——?

REBECCA.

Yes.

ROSMER.

And you didn't send it up?

REBECCA.

You will read it soon enough.

ROSMER.

Oh, indeed? [*Takes the paper and reads, standing by the table*]—What!—"We cannot warn our readers too earnestly against unprincipled renegades." [*Looks at her.*] They call me a renegade, Rebecca.

REBECCA.

They mention no names.

ROSMER.

That makes no difference. [*Reads on.*] "Secret traitors to the good cause."—"Judas-natures, who make brazen confession of their apostasy as soon as they think the most convenient and—profitable moment has arrived." "Ruthless befouling of a name honoured through generations"—"in the confident hope of a suitable reward from the party in momentary power." [*Lays down the paper on the table.*] And they can say such things of me! —Men who have known me so long and so well! Things they themselves don't believe. Things they know there is not a word of truth in—they print them all the same.

REBECCA.

That is not all.

ROSMER.

[*Takes up the paper again.*] "Inexperience and lack of judgment the only excuse"—"pernicious influence—possibly extending to matters which, for the present, we do not wish to make subjects of public discussion or accusation." [*Looks at her.*] What is this?

REBECCA.

It is aimed at me, plainly enough.

ROSMER.

[*Lays down the paper.*] Rebecca,—this is the conduct of dishonourable men.

REBECCA.

Yes, they need scarcely be so contemptuous of Mortensgård.

ROSMER.

[*Walks about the room.*] Something m u s t be done. All that is good in human nature will go to ruin, if this is allowed to go on. But it s h a l l not go on! Oh, what a joy—what a joy it would be to me to let a little light into all this gloom and ugliness!

REBECCA.

[*Rises.*] Ah yes, Rosmer. In that you have a great and glorious object to live for.

ROSMER.

Only think, if I could rouse them to see themselves as they are; teach them to repent and blush before their better natures; bring them together in mutual forbearance—in love, Rebecca!

REBECCA.

Yes, put your whole strength into that, and you m u s t succeed.

ROSMER.

I think success must be possible. Oh, what a delight it would be then to live one's life! No more malignant wrangling; only emulation. All eyes fixed on the same goal. Every mind, every will pressing forward—upward—each by the path its nature prescribes for it. Happiness for all—through all. [*Happens to look out of the window, starts, and says sadly.*] Ah! Not through me.

REBECCA.

Not——? Not through you?

ROSMER.

Nor f o r me.

REBECCA.

Oh Rosmer, do not let such doubts take hold of you.

ROSMER.

Happiness—dear Rebecca—happiness is above all things the calm, glad certainty of innocence.

REBECCA.

[*Looks straight before her.*] Yes, innocence——

ROSMER.

Oh, y o u cannot know what guilt means. But I——

REBECCA.

You least of all!

ROSMER.

[*Points out of the window.*] The mill-race.

REBECCA.

Oh Rosmer——!

MADAM HELSETH *looks in at the door.*

MADAM HELSETH.

Miss West!

REBECCA.

Presently, presently. Not now.

MADAM HELSETH.

Only a word, Miss.

[REBECCA *goes to the door.* MADAM HELSETH *tells her something. They whisper together for a few moments.* MADAM HELSETH *nods and goes out.*

ROSMER.

[*Uneasily.*] Was it anything for me?

REBECCA.

No, only something about the house-work.—You ought to go out into the fresh air, dear Rosmer. You should take a good long walk.

ROSMER.

[*Takes up his hat.*] Yes, come. Let us go together.

REBECCA.

No, dear, I can't just now. You must go alone. But shake off all these gloomy thoughts. Promise me.

ROSMER.

I am afraid I shall never shake them off.

REBECCA.

Oh, that such baseless fancies should take so strong a hold of you——!

ROSMER.

Not so baseless I am afraid, Rebecca. I lay awake all night thinking it over and over. Perhaps Beata saw clearly after all.

REBECCA.

In what?

ROSMER.

In her belief that I loved you, Rebecca.

REBECCA.

Right in t h a t!

ROSMER.

[*Lays his hat down on the table.*] The question that haunts me is this: were we two not deceiving ourselves all the time—when we called our relation friendship?

REBECCA.

You mean that it might as well have been called——?

ROSMER.

——love. Yes, Rebecca, that is what I mean. Even while Beata was alive, all my thoughts were for you. It was you alone I longed for. It was when you were by my side that I felt the calm gladness of utter content. If you think it over, Rebecca—did we not feel for each other from the first a sort of sweet, secret child-love—desireless, dreamless? Was it not so with you? Tell me.

REBECCA.

[*Struggling with herself.*] Oh—I don't know what to answer.

ROSMER.

And it was this close-linked life in and for each other that we took for friendship. No, Rebecca—our bond has

been a spiritual marriage—perhaps from the very first. That is why there is guilt on my soul. I had no right to such happiness—it was a sin against Beata.

REBECCA.

No right to live happily? Do you believe that, Rosmer?

ROSMER.

She looked at our relation with the eyes of h e r love —judged it after the fashion of h e r love. Inevitably. Beata could not have judged otherwise than she did.

REBECCA.

But how can you accuse yourself because of Beata's delusion?

ROSMER.

It was love for me—h e r kind of love—that drove her into the mill-race. That is an immovable fact, Rebecca. And that is what I can never get over.

REBECCA.

Oh, think of nothing but the great, beautiful task you have devoted your life to.

ROSMER.

[*Shakes his head.*] It can never be accomplished, dear. Not by me. Not after what I have come to know.

REBECCA.

Why not by you?

ROSMER.

Because no cause ever triumphs that has its origin in sin.

REBECCA.

[*Vehemently.*] Oh, these are only ancestral doubts—ancestral fears—ancestral scruples. They say the dead come back to Rosmersholm in the shape of rushing white horses. I think this shows that it is true.

ROSMER.

Be that as it may; what does it matter, so long as I cannot rid myself of the feeling? And believe me, Rebecca, it is as I tell you. The cause that is to win a lasting victory must have for its champion a happy, an innocent man.

REBECCA.

Is happiness so indispensable to you, Rosmer?

ROSMER.

Happiness? Yes, dear,—it is.

REBECCA.

To you, who can never laugh?

ROSMER.

Yes, in spite of that. Believe me, I have a great capacity for happiness.

REBECCA.

Now go for your walk, dear. A good long walk. Do you hear?—See, here is your hat. And your stick too.

ROSMER.

[*Takes both.*] Thanks. And you won't come with me?

REBECCA.

No, no; I can't just now.

ROSMER.

Very well, then. You are with me none the less.

[*He goes out by the entrance door.* REBECCA *waits a moment, cautiously watching his departure from behind the open door; then she goes to the door on the right.*

REBECCA.

[*Opens the door, and says in a low tone.*] Now, Madam Helseth. You can show him in now.

[*Goes towards the window.*

A moment after RECTOR KROLL *enters from the right. He bows silently and formally, and keeps his hat in his hand.*

KROLL.

He has gone out?

REBECCA

Yes.

KROLL.

Does he usually stay out long?

REBECCA.

Yes, he does. But one cannot count on him to-day. So if you don't care to meet him——

KROLL.

No, no. It is you I want to speak to,—quite alone.

REBECCA.

Then we had better not lose time. Sit down, Rector.
[*She sits in the easy-chair by the window.* RECTOR KROLL *sits on a chair beside her.*

KROLL.

Miss West—you can scarcely imagine how deeply and painfully I have taken this to heart—this change in Johannes Rosmer.

REBECCA.

We expected it would be so—at first.

KROLL.

Only at first?

REBECCA.

Rosmer was confident that sooner or later you would join him.

KROLL.

I?

REBECCA.

You and all his other friends.

KROLL.

Ah, there you see! That shows the infirmity of his judgment in all that concerns men and practical life

REBECCA.

But after all—since he feels it a necessity to emancipate himself on all sides——

KROLL.

Yes, but wait—that is just what I do not believe.

REBECCA.

What d o you believe then?

KROLL.

I believe that y o u are at the bottom of it all.

REBECCA.

It is your wife who has put that in your head, Rector Kroll.

KROLL.

No matter who has put it in my head. What is certain is that I feel a strong suspicion—an exceedingly strong suspicion—when I think things over, and piece together all I know of your behaviour ever since you came here.

REBECCA.

[*Looks at him.*] I seem to recollect a time when you felt an exceedingly strong f a i t h in me, dear Rector. I might almost call it a w a r m faith.

KROLL.

[*In a subdued voice.*] Whom could you not bewitch—if you tried?

REBECCA.

Did I try——?

KROLL.

Yes, you did. I am no longer such a fool as to believe that there was any feeling in the matter. You simply wanted to get a footing at Rosmersholm—to strike root here—and in that I was to serve you. Now I see it.

REBECCA.

You seem utterly to have forgotten that it was Beata who begged and implored me to come out here?

KROLL.

Yes, when you had bewitched her to. Can the feeling she came to entertain for you be called friendship? It was adoration—almost idolatry. It developed into—what shall I call it?—a sort of desperate passion.—Yes, that is the right word for it.

REBECCA.

Be so good as to recollect the state your sister was in. So far as I am concerned, I don't think any one can accuse me of being hysterical.

KROLL.

No; that you certainly are not. But that makes you all the more dangerous to the people you want to get into your power. It is easy for you to weigh your acts and calculate consequences—just because your heart is cold.

REBECCA.

Cold? Are you so sure of that?

KROLL.

I am quite certain of it now. Otherwise you could never have lived here year after year without faltering in the pursuit of your object. Well, well—you have gained your end. You have got him and everything into your power. But in order to do so, you have not scrupled to make him unhappy.

REBECCA.

That is not true. It is not I—it is you yourself that have made him unhappy.

KROLL.

I?

REBECCA.

Yes, when you led him to imagine that he was responsible for Beata's terrible end.

KROLL.

Does he feel that so deeply, then?

REBECCA.

How can you doubt it? A mind so sensitive as his——

KROLL.

I thought that an emancipated man, so called, was above all such scruples.—But there we have it! Oh yes —I admit I knew how it would be The descendant of

the men that look down on us from these walls—how could he hope to cut himself adrift from all that has been handed down without a break from generation to generation?

REBECCA.

[*Looks down thoughtfully.*] Johannes Rosmer's spirit is deeply rooted in his ancestry. That is very certain.

KROLL.

Yes, and you should have taken that fact into consideration, if you had felt any affection for him. But that sort of consideration was no doubt beyond you. There is such an immeasurable difference between your antecedents and his.

REBECCA.

What antecedents do you mean?

KROLL.

I am speaking of your origin—your family antecedents, Miss West.

REBECCA.

Oh, indeed! Yes, it is quite true that I come of very humble folk. Nevertheless——

KROLL.

I am not thinking of rank and position. I allude to your moral antecedents.

REBECCA.

Moral——? In what sense?

KROLL.

The circumstances of your birth.

REBECCA.

What do you mean?

KROLL.

I only mention the matter because it accounts for your whole conduct.

REBECCA.

I do not understand this. You must explain.

KROLL.

I really did not suppose you could require an explanation. Otherwise it would have been very odd that you should have let Dr. West adopt you——

REBECCA.

[*Rises.*] Ah! Now I understand.

KROLL.

——and that you should have taken his name. Your mother's name was Gamvik.

REBECCA.

[*Walks across the room.*] My father's name was Gamvik, Rector Kroll.

KROLL.

Your mother's business must have brought her very frequently into contact with the parish doctor.

REBECCA.

Yes, it did.

KROLL.

And then he takes you into his house—as soon as your mother dies. He treats you harshly; and yet you stay with him. You know that he won't leave you a half-penny—as a matter of fact, you only got a case full of books—and yet you stay on; you bear with him; you nurse him to the last.

REBECCA.

[*Stands by the table, looking scornfully at him.*] And you account for all this by assuming that there was something immoral—something criminal about my birth?

KROLL.

I attribute your care for him to involuntary filial instinct. Indeed I believe your whole conduct is determined by your origin.

REBECCA.

[*Vehemently.*] But there is not a single word of truth in what you say! And I can prove it! Dr. West did not come to Finmark till after I was born.

KROLL.

Excuse me, Miss West. He settled there the year before. I have assured myself of that.

REBECCA.

You are mistaken, I say! You are utterly mistaken.

KROLL.

You told me the day before yesterday that you were nine-and-twenty—in your thirtieth year.

REBECCA.

Indeed! Did I say so?

KROLL.

Yes, you did. And I can calculate from that——

REBECCA.

Stop! You needn't calculate. I may as well tell you at once: I am a year older than I give myself out to be.

KROLL.

[*Smiles incredulously.*] Really! I am surprised! What can be the reason of that?

REBECCA.

When I had passed twenty-five, it seemed to me I was getting altogether too old for an unmarried woman. And so I began to lie about my age.

KROLL.

You? An emancipated woman! Have you prejudices about the age for marriage?

REBECCA.

Yes, it was idiotic of me—idiotic and absurd. But some folly or other will always cling to us, not to be shaken off. We are made so.

KROLL.

Well, so be it; but my calculation may be right, none the less. For Dr. West was up there on a short visit the year before he got the appointment.

REBECCA.

[*With a vehement outburst.*] It is not true!

KROLL.

Is it not true?

REBECCA.

No. My mother never spoke of any such visit.

KROLL.

Did she not?

REBECCA.

No, never. Nor Dr. West either; not a word about it.

KROLL.

Might not that be because they both had reasons for suppressing a year? Just as you have done, Miss West. Perhaps it is a family foible.

REBECCA.

[*Walks about clenching and wringing her hands.*] It is impossible. You want to cheat me into believing it. This can never, never be true. It cannot! Never in this world— —!

KROLL.

[*Rises.*] My dear Miss West—why in heaven's name are you so terribly excited? You quite frighten me! What am I to think—to believe——?

REBECCA.

Nothing! You are to think and believe nothing.

KROLL.

Then you must really tell me how you can take this affair—this possibility—so terribly to heart.

REBECCA.

[*Controlling herself.*] It is perfectly simple, Rector Kroll. I have no wish to be taken for an illegitimate child.

KROLL.

Indeed! Well well, let us be satisfied with that explanation—in the meantime. But in that case you must still have a certain—prejudice on that point too?

REBECCA.

Yes, I suppose I have.

KROLL.

Ah, I fancy it is much the same with most of what you call your "emancipation." You have read yourself into a number of new ideas and opinions. You have got a sort of smattering of recent discoveries in various fields—discoveries that seem to overthrow certain principles

which have hitherto been held impregnable and unassailable. But all this has only been a matter of the intellect, Miss West—a superficial acquisition. It has not passed into your blood.

REBECCA.

[*Thoughtfully.*] Perhaps you are right.

KROLL.

Yes, look into your own mind, and you will see! And if this is the case with you, one may easily guess how it must be with Johannes Rosmer. It is sheer, unmitigated madness—it is running blindfold to destruction—for h i m to think of coming openly forward and confessing himself an apostate! Only think—a man of his sensitive nature! Imagine h i m disowned and persecuted by the circle of which he has always formed a part—exposed to ruthless attacks from all the best people in the community! He is not—he never can be the man to endure all that.

REBECCA.

He m u s t endure it! It is too late now for him to retreat.

KROLL.

Not at all too late. By no means. What has happened can be hushed up—or at least explained away as a mere temporary aberration, however deplorable. But—one measure is certainly indispensable.

REBECCA.

And what is that?

KROLL.

You must get him to legalise the position, Miss West.

REBECCA.

His position towards me?

KROLL.

Yes. You must make him do that.

REBECCA.

Then you absolutely cannot clear your mind of the idea that our position requires to be—legalised, as you call it?

KROLL.

I would rather not go into the matter too closely. But I believe I have noticed that it is nowhere easier to break through all so-called prejudices than in—h'm——

REBECCA.

In the relation between man and woman, you mean?

KROLL.

Yes,—to speak plainly—I think so.

REBECCA.

[*Wanders across the room and looks out at the window.*] I could almost say—I wish you were right, Rector Kroll.

KROLL.

What do you mean by that? You say it so strangely.

REBECCA.

Oh, well—please let us drop the subject. Ah,—there he comes.

KROLL.

Already! Then I will go.

REBECCA.

[*Goes towards him.*] No—please stay. There is something I want you to hear.

KROLL.

Not now. I don't feel as if I could bear to see him.

REBECCA.

I beg you to stay. Do! If not, you will regret it by-and-by. It is the last time I shall ask you for anything.

KROLL.

[*Looks at her in surprise and puts down his hat.*] Very well, Miss West—so be it, then.

A short silence. Then JOHANNES ROSMER *enters from the hall.*

ROSMER.

[*Sees the* RECTOR, *and stops in the doorway.*] What!—Are y o u here?

REBECCA.

He did not wish to meet you, dear.[1]

[1] In the original, Rebecca here addresses Rosmer as "*du*" for the first time in Kroll's presence.

KROLL.

[*Involuntarily.*] "Dear!"

REBECCA.

Yes, Rector Kroll, Rosmer and I say "dear" to each other. That is one result of our "position."

KROLL.

Was t h a t what you wanted me to hear?

REBECCA.

That—and a little more.

ROSMER.

[*Comes forward.*] What is the object of this visit?

KROLL.

I wanted to try once more to stop you and win you back to us.

ROSMER.

[*Points to the newspaper.*] After what appears in that paper?

KROLL.

I did not write it.

ROSMER.

Did you make the slightest effort to prevent its appearance?

KROLL.

That would have been to betray the cause I serve. And, besides, it was not in my power.

REBECCA.

[*Tears the paper into shreds, crushes up the pieces and throws them behind the stove.*] There! Now it is out of sight. And let it be out of mind too. For there will be nothing more of that sort, Rosmer.

KROLL.

Ah, if you could only make sure of t h a t !

REBECCA.

Come, let us sit down, dear. All three of us. And then I will tell you everything.

ROSMER.

[*Seats himself mechanically.*] What has come over you, Rebecca? This unnatural calmness—what is it?

REBECCA.

The calmness of resolution. [*Seats herself.*] Pray sit down too, Rector.

[RECTOR KROLL *seats himself on the sofa.*

ROSMER.

Resolution, you say? What resolution?

REBECCA.

I am going to give you back what you require in order to live your life. Dear friend, you shall have your happy innocence back again!

ROSMER.

What can you mean?

REBECCA.

I have only to tell you something. That will be enough.

ROSMER.

Well!

REBECCA.

When I came down here from Finmark—along with Dr. West—it seemed to me that a great, wide new world was opening up before me. The Doctor had taught me all sorts of things—all the fragmentary knowledge of life that I possessed in those days. [*With a struggle and in a scarcely audible voice.*] And then——

KROLL.

And then?

ROSMER.

But Rebecca—I know all this.

REBECCA.

[*Mastering herself.*] Yes, yes—you are right. You know enough about this.

KROLL.

[*Looks hard at her.*] Perhaps I had better go.

REBECCA.

No, please stay where you are, my dear Rector. [*To* ROSMER.] Well, you see, this was how it was—I wanted to take my share in the life of the new era that was dawning, with all its new ideas.—Rector Kroll told me one day that Ulric Brendel had had great influence over you while you were still a boy. I thought it must surely be possible for me to carry on his work.

ROSMER.

You came here with a secret design——?

REBECCA.

We two, I thought, should march onward in freedom, side by side. Ever onward. Ever farther and farther to the front. But between you and perfect emancipation there rose that dismal, insurmountable barrier.

ROSMER.

What barrier do you mean?

REBECCA.

I mean this, Rosmer: You could grow into freedom only in the clear, fresh sunshine—and here you were pining, sickening in the gloom of such a marriage.

ROSMER.

You have never before spoken to me of my marriage in t h a t tone.

REBECCA.

No, I did not dare to, for I should have frightened you.

KROLL.

[*Nods to* ROSMER.] Do you hear t h a t?

REBECCA.

[*Goes on.*] But I saw quite well where your deliverance lay—your only deliverance. And then I went to work.

ROSMER.

Went to work? In what way?

KROLL.

Do you mean that——?

REBECCA.

Yes, Rosmer—— [*Rises.*] Sit still. You too, Rector Kroll. But now it must out. It was not you, Rosmer. You are innocent. It was *I* that lured—that ended in luring Beata out into the paths of delusion——

ROSMER.

[*Springs up.*] Rebecca!

KROLL.

[*Rises from the sofa.*] The paths of delusion!

REBECCA.

The paths—that led to the mill-race. Now you know it, both of you.

ROSMER.

[*As if stunned.*] But I don't understand—— What is it she is saying? I don't understand a word——!

KROLL.

Oh yes, Rosmer, I am beginning to understand.

ROSMER.

But what did you do? What can you possibly have told her? There was nothing—absolutely nothing to tell!

REBECCA.

She came to know that you were working yourself free from all the old prejudices.

ROSMER.

Yes, but that was not the case at that time.

REBECCA.

I knew that it soon would be.

KROLL.

[*Nods to* ROSMER.] Aha!

ROSMER.

And then? What more? I must know all now.

REBECCA.

Some time after—I begged and implored her to let me go away from Rosmersholm.

ROSMER.

Why did you want to go—then?

REBECCA.

I did not want to go; I wanted to stay here, where I was. But I told her that it would be best for us all—that I should go away in time. I gave her to understand that if I stayed here any longer, I could not—I could not tell—what might happen.

ROSMER.

Then this is what you said and did!

REBECCA.

Yes, Rosmer.

ROSMER.

T h i s is what you call "going to work!"

REBECCA.

[*In a broken voice.*] I called it so, yes.

ROSMER.

[*After a pause.*] Have you confessed all now, Rebecca?

REBECCA.

Yes.

KROLL.

Not all.

REBECCA.

[*Looks at him in fear.*] What more should there be?

KROLL.

Did you not at last give Beata to understand that it was necessary—not only that it would be wisest, but that it was necessary—both for your own sake and Rosmer's, that you should go away somewhere—as soon as possible? Well?

REBECCA.

[*Low and indistinctly.*] Perhaps I did say something of the sort.

ROSMER.

[*Sinks into the arm-chair by the window.*] And this tissue of lies and deceit she—my unhappy, sick wife believed in! Believed in it so firmly! So immovably! [*Looks up at* REBECCA.] And she never turned to me. Never said one word to me! Oh, Rebecca,—I can see it in your face—you dissuaded her from it!

REBECCA.

She had conceived a fixed idea that she, as a childless wife, had no right to be here. And then she imagined that it was her duty to you to efface herself.

ROSMER.

And you—you did nothing to disabuse her of the idea?

REBECCA.

No.

KROLL.

Perhaps you confirmed her in it? Answer me! Did you not?

REBECCA.

I believe she may have understood me so.

ROSMER.

Yes, yes—and in every thing she bowed before your will. And she did efface herself! [*Springs up.*] How could you—how could you play this ghastly game!

REBECCA.

It seemed to me I had to choose between your life and hers, Rosmer.

KROLL.

[*Severely and impressively.*] That choice was not for y o u to make.

REBECCA.

[*Vehemently.*] You think then that I was cool and calculating and self-possessed all the time! I was not the same woman then that I am now, as I stand here telling it all. Besides, there are two sorts of will in us I believe! I wanted Beata away, by one means or another; but I never really believed that it would come to pass. As I felt my way forward, at each step I ventured, I seemed to hear something within me cry out: No farther! Not a step farther! And yet I c o u l d not stop. I h a d to venture the least little bit farther. Only one hair's-breadth more. And then one more—and always one more.—And then it happened.—That is the way such things come about. [*A short silence.*

ROSMER.

[*To* REBECCA.] What do you think lies before y o u now? After this?

REBECCA.

Things must go with me as they will. It doesn't greatly matter.

KROLL.

Not a word of remorse! Is it possible you feel none?

REBECCA.

[*Coldly putting aside his question.*] Excuse me, Rector Kroll—that is a matter which concerns no one but me. I must settle it with myself.

KROLL.

[*To* ROSMER.] And this is the woman you are living under the same roof with—in the closest intimacy! [*Looks round at the pictures.*] Oh if those that are gone could see us now!

ROSMER.

Are you going back to town?

KROLL.

[*Takes up his hat.*] Yes. The sooner the better.

ROSMER.

[*Does the same.*] Then I will go with you.

KROLL.

Will you! Ah yes, I was sure we had not lost you for good.

ROSMER.

Come then, Kroll! Come!

[*Both go out through the hall without looking at* REBECCA.

[*After a moment,* REBECCA *goes cautiously to the window and looks out through the flowers.*

REBECCA.

[*Speaks to herself under her breath.*] Not over the foot-bridge to-day either. He goes round. Never across the mill-race. Never. [*Leaves the window.*] Well, well, well!

[*Goes and pulls the bell-rope; a moment after,* MADAM HELSETH *enters from the right.*

MADAM HELSETH.

What is it, Miss?

REBECCA.

Madam Helseth, would you be so good as to have my trunk brought down from the garret?

MADAM HELSETH.

Your trunk?

REBECCA.

Yes—the brown sealskin trunk, you know.

MADAM HELSETH.

Yes, yes. But, Lord preserve us—are you going on a journey, Miss?

REBECCA.

Yes—now I am going on a journey, Madam Helseth.

MADAM HELSETH.

And immediately!

REBECCA.

As soon as I have packed up.

MADAM HELSETH.

Well, I've never heard the like of that! But you'll come back again soon, Miss, of course?

REBECCA.

I shall never come back again.

MADAM HELSETH.

Never! Dear Lord, what will things be like at Rosmersholm when you're gone, Miss? And the poor Pastor was just beginning to be so happy and comfortable.

REBECCA.

Yes, but I have taken fright to-day, Madam Helseth.

MADAM HELSETH.

Taken fright! Dear, dear! how was that?

REBECCA.

I thought I saw something like a glimpse of white horses.

MADAM HELSETH.

White horses! In broad daylight!

REBECCA.

Oh, they are abroad early and late—the white horses of Rosmersholm. [*With a change of tone.*] Well,—about the trunk, Madam Helseth.

MADAM HELSETH.

Yes, yes. The trunk. [*Both go out to the right.*

ACT FOURTH

The sitting-room at Rosmersholm. Late evening. A lighted lamp, with a shade over it, on the table.

REBECCA WEST *stands by the table, packing some small articles in a hand-bag. Her cloak, hat, and the white crocheted shawl are hanging over the back of the sofa.*

MADAM HELSETH *enters from the right.*

MADAM HELSETH.

[*Speaks in a low voice and appears ill at ease.*] All your things have been taken down, Miss. They are in the kitchen passage.

REBECCA.

Very well. You have ordered the carriage?

MADAM HELSETH.

Yes. The coachman wants to know what time he ought to be here.

REBECCA.

About eleven o'clock, I think. The steamer starts at midnight.

MADAM HELSETH.

[*Hesitates a little.*] But the Pastor? If he shouldn't be home by that time?

REBECCA.

I shall go all the same. If I don't see him, you can tell him that I will write to him—a long letter. Tell him that.

MADAM HELSETH.

Yes, writing—that may be all very well. But, poor Miss West—I do think you should try to speak to him once more.

REBECCA.

Perhaps so. And yet—perhaps not.

MADAM HELSETH.

Well—that I should live to see this! I never thought of such a thing.

REBECCA.

What did you think then, Madam Helseth?

MADAM HELSETH.

Well, I certainly thought Pastor Rosmer was a more dependable man than this.

REBECCA.

Dependable?

MADAM HELSETH.

Yes, that's what *I* say.

REBECCA.

Why, my dear Madam Helseth, what do you mean?

MADAM HELSETH.

I mean what's right and true, Miss. He shouldn't get out of it in t h i s way, that he shouldn't.

REBECCA.

[*Looks at her.*] Come now, Madam Helseth, tell me plainly: what do you think is the reason I am going away?

MADAM HELSETH.

Well, Heaven forgive us, I suppose it can't be helped, Miss. Ah, well, well, well! But I certainly don't think the Pastor's behaving handsome-like. Mortensgård had some excuse; for h e r husband was alive, so that they two couldn't marry, however much they wanted to. But as for the Pastor—h'm!

REBECCA.

[*With a faint smile.*] Could you have believed such a thing of Pastor Rosmer and me?

MADAM HELSETH.

No, never in this world. At least, I mean—not until to-day.

REBECCA.

But to-day, then——?

MADAM HELSETH.

Well,—after all the horrible things that they tell me the papers are saying about the Pastor——

REBECCA.

Aha!

MADAM HELSETH.

For the man that can go over to Mortensgård's religion—good Lord, I can believe anything of him.

REBECCA.

Oh yes, I suppose so. But what about me? What have you to say about me?

MADAM HELSETH.

Lord preserve us, Miss—I don't see that there's much to be said against y o u. It's not so easy for a lone woman to be always on her guard, that's certain.—We're all of us human, Miss West.

REBECCA.

That's very true, Madam Helseth. We are all of us human.—What are you listening to?

MADAM HELSETH.

[*In a low voice.*] Oh Lord,—if I don't believe that's him coming.

REBECCA.

[*Starts.*] After all then——? [*Resolutely.*] Well well; so be it.

JOHANNES ROSMER *enters from the hall.*

ROSMER.

[*Sees the hand-bag, etc., turns to* REBECCA, *and asks.*] What does this mean?

REBECCA.

I am going.

ROSMER.

At once?

REBECCA.

Yes. [*To* MADAM HELSETH.] Eleven o'clock then.

MADAM HELSETH.

Very well, Miss. [*Goes out to the right.*

ROSMER.

[*After a short pause.*] Where are you going to, Rebecca?

REBECCA.

North, by the steamer.

ROSMER.

North? What takes you to the North?

REBECCA.

It was there I came from.

ROSMER.

But you have no ties there now.

REBECCA.

I have none here either.

ROSMER.

What do you think of doing?

REBECCA.

I don't know. I only want to have done with it all.

ROSMER.

To have done with it?

REBECCA.

Rosmersholm has broken me.

ROSMER.

[*His attention aroused.*] Do you say that?

REBECCA.

Broken me utterly and hoplessly.—I had a free and fearless will when I came here. Now I have bent my neck under a strange law.—From this day forth, I feel as if I had no courage for anything in the world.

ROSMER.

Why not? What is the law that you say you have——?

REBECCA.

Dear, don't let us talk of t h a t just now.—What happened between you and the Rector?

ROSMER.

We have made peace.

REBECCA.

Ah yes; so that was the end.

ROSMER.

He gathered all our old friends together at his house. They have made it clear to me that the work of ennobling the minds of men—is not for me.—And besides, it is hopeless in itself, Rebecca.—I shall let it alone.

REBECCA.

Yes, yes—perhaps it is best so.

ROSMER.

Is t h a t what you say now? Do you think so n o w?

REBECCA.

I have come to think so—in the last few days.

ROSMER.

You are lying, Rebecca.

REBECCA.

Lying——!

ROSMER.

Yes, you are lying. You have never believed in me. You have never believed that I was man enough to carry the cause through to victory.

REBECCA.

I believed that we two together could do it.

ROSMER.

That is not true. You thought that you yourself could do something great in life; and that you could use me to

further your ends. I was to be a serviceable instrument to you—t h a t is what you thought.

REBECCA.

Listen to me, Rosmer——

ROSMER.

[*Seats himself listlessly on the sofa.*] Oh, what is the use? I see through it all now—I have been like a glove in your hands.

REBECCA.

Listen, Rosmer. Hear what I have to say. It will be for the last time. [*Sits in a chair close to the sofa.*] I intended to write you all about it—when I was back in the North. But I daresay it is best that you should hear it at once.

ROSMER.

Have you more confessions to make?

REBECCA.

The greatest of all is to come.

ROSMER.

The greatest?

REBECCA.

What you have never suspected. What gives light and shade to all the rest.

ROSMER.

[*Shakes his head.*] I don't understand you at all.

REBECCA.

It is perfectly true that I once schemed to gain a footing at Rosmersholm. I thought I could not fail to turn things to good account here. In one way or the other—you understand.

ROSMER.

Well, you accomplished your ends.

REBECCA.

I believe I could have accomplished anything, anything in the world—at that time. For I had still my fearless, free-born will. I knew no scruples—I stood in awe of no human tie.—But then began what has broken my will—and cowed me so pitiably for all my days.

ROSMER.

What began? Do not speak in riddles.

REBECCA.

It came over me,—this wild, uncontrollable passion——. Oh, Rosmer——!

ROSMER.

Passion? You——! For what?

REBECCA.

For you.

ROSMER.

[*Tries to spring up.*] What is this?

REBECCA.

[*Stops him.*] Sit still, dear; there is more to tell.

ROSMER.

And you mean to say—that you have loved me—in that way!

REBECCA.

I thought that it should be called love—then. Yes, I thought it was love. But it was not. It was what I said. It was a wild, uncontrollable passion.

ROSMER.

[*With difficulty.*] Rebecca, is it really you—you yourself—that you are speaking of?

REBECCA.

Yes, would you believe it, Rosmer?

ROSMER.

Then it was because of this—under the influence of this—that you—that you "went to work," as you call it?

REBECCA.

It came upon me like a storm on the sea. It was like one of the storms we sometimes have in the North in the winter-time. It seizes you—and whirls you along with it—wherever it will. There is no resisting it.

ROSMER.

And so it swept the unhappy Beata into the mill-race.

REBECCA.

Yes; for it was a life-and-death struggle between Beata and me at that time.

ROSMER.

Assuredly you were the strongest at Rosmersholm. Stronger than Beata and I together.

REBECCA.

I judged you rightly in so far that I was sure I could never reach you until you were a free man, both in circumstances—and in spirit.

ROSMER.

But I don't understand you, Rebecca. You—yourself—your whole conduct is an insoluble riddle to me. I am free now—both in spirit and in circumstances. You have reached the very goal you aimed at from the first. And yet——

REBECCA.

I have never stood farther from my goal than now.

ROSMER.

And yet I say—when I asked you yesterday—begged you to be my wife—you cried out, as if in fear, that it could never be.

REBECCA.

I cried out in despair, Rosmer.

ROSMER.

Why?

REBECCA.

Because Rosmersholm has sapped my strength. My old fearless will has had its wings clipped here. It is crippled! The time is past when I had courage for anything in the world. I have lost the power of action, Rosmer.

ROSMER.

Tell me how this has come about.

REBECCA.

It has come about through my life with you.

ROSMER.

But how? How?

REBECCA.

When I was left alone with you here,—and when you had become yourself again——

ROSMER.

Yes, yes?

REBECCA.

——for you were never quite yourself so long as Beata lived——

ROSMER.

I am afraid you are right there.

REBECCA.

But when I found myself sharing your life here,—in quiet—in solitude,—when you showed me all your

thoughts without reserve—every tender and delicate feeling, just as it came to you—t h e n the great change came over me. Little by little, you understand. Almost imperceptibly—but at last with such overwhelming force that it reached to the depths of my soul.

ROSMER.

Oh, is this true, Rebecca?

REBECCA.

All the rest—the horrible sense-intoxicated desire—passed far, far away from me. All the whirling passions settled down into quiet and silence. Rest descended on my soul—a stillness as on one of our northern bird-cliffs under the midnight sun.

ROSMER.

Tell me more of this. Tell me all you can.

REBECCA.

There is not much more, dear. Only this—it was love that was born in me. The great self-denying love, that is content with life, as we two have lived it together.

ROSMER.

Oh, if I had only had the faintest suspicion of all this!

REBECCA.

It is best as it is. Yesterday—when you asked me if I would be your wife—I cried out with joy——

ROSMER.

Yes, did you not, Rebecca! I thought that was the meaning of your cry.

REBECCA.

For a moment, yes. I had forgotten myself. It was my old buoyant will that was struggling to be free. But it has no energy left now—no power of endurance.

ROSMER.

How do you account for what has happened to you?

REBECCA.

It is the Rosmer view of life—or y o u r view of life, at any rate—that has infected my will.

ROSMER.

Infected?

REBECCA.

And made it sick. Enslaved it to laws that had no power over me before. You—life with you—has ennobled my mind——

ROSMER.

Oh that I could believe it!

REBECCA.

You may safely believe it! The Rosmer view of life ennobles. But—— [*Shaking her head.*] But—but——

ROSMER.

But——? Well?

REBECCA.

——but it kills happiness.

ROSMER.

Do you think so, Rebecca?

REBECCA.

My happiness, at any rate.

ROSMER.

Yes, but are you so certain of that? If I were to ask you again now——? If I were to beg and entreat you——?

REBECCA.

Dear,—never speak of this again! It is impossible——! For you must know, Rosmer, I have a—a past behind me.

ROSMER.

More than what you have told me?

REBECCA.

Yes. Something different and something more.

ROSMER.

[*With a faint smile.*] Is it not strange, Rebecca? Some such idea has crossed my mind now and then.

REBECCA.

It has? And yet——? Even so——?

ROSMER.

I never believed it. I only played with it—in my thoughts, you understand.

REBECCA.

If you wish it, I will tell you all, at once.

ROSMER.

[*Turning it off.*] No, no! I will not hear a word. Whatever it may be—I can forget it.

REBECCA.

But I cannot.

ROSMER.

Oh Rebecca——!

REBECCA.

Yes, Rosmer—t h i s is the terrible part of it: that now, when all life's happiness is within my grasp—my heart is changed, and my own past cuts me off from it.

ROSMER.

Your past is dead, Rebecca. It has no hold on you any more—it is no part of you—as you are n o w.

REBECCA.

Oh, you know that these are only phrases, dear. And innocence? Where am I to get t h a t from?

ROSMER.

[*Sadly.*] Ah,—innocence.

REBECCA.

Yes, innocence. That is the source of peace and happiness. T h a t was the vital truth you were to implant in the coming generation of happy noble-men——

ROSMER.

Oh, don't remind me of t h a t. It was only an abortive dream, Rebecca—an immature idea, that I myself no longer believe in.—Ah no, we cannot be ennobled from without, Rebecca.

REBECCA.

[*Softly.*] Not even by tranquil love, Rosmer?

ROSMER.

[*Thoughtfully.*] Yes—t h a t would be the great thing—the most glorious in life, almost—if it w e r e so. [*Moves uneasily.*] But how can I be certain of that? How convince myself?

REBECCA.

Do you not believe me, Rosmer?

ROSMER.

Oh Rebecca—how c a n I believe in you, fully? You who have all this while been cloaking, concealing such a multitude of things!—Now you come forward with something new. If you have a secret purpose in all this, tell me plainly what it is. Is there anything you want to gain by it? You know that I will gladly do everything I can for you.

REBECCA.

[*Wringing her hands.*] Oh this killing doubt——! Rosmer—Rosmer——!

ROSMER.

Yes, is it not terrible, Rebecca? But I cannot help it. I shall never be able to shake off the doubt. I can never be absolutely sure that you are mine in pure and perfect love.

REBECCA.

Is there nothing in the depths of your own heart that bears witness to the transformation in me? And tells you that it is due to you—and you alone?

ROSMER.

Oh Rebecca—I no longer believe in my power of transforming any one. My faith in myself is utterly dead. I believe neither in myself nor in you.

REBECCA.

[*Looks darkly at him.*] Then how will you be able to live your life?

ROSMER.

That I don't know. I cannot imagine how. I don't think I c a n live it.—And I know of nothing in the world that is worth living for.

REBECCA.

Oh, life—life will renew itself. Let us hold fast to it, Rosmer.—We shall leave it soon enough.

ROSMER.

[*Springs up restlessly.*] Then give me my faith again! My faith in y o u, Rebecca! My faith in your love! Proof! I must have proof!

REBECCA.

Proof? How can I give you proof——?

ROSMER.

You m u s t! [*Walks across the room.*] I cannot bear this desolation—this horrible emptiness—this—this——

[*A loud knock at the hall door.*

REBECCA.

[*Starts up from her chair.*] Ah—did you hear that?

The door opens. ULRIC BRENDEL *enters. He has a white shirt on, a black coat and a good pair of boots, with his trousers tucked into them. Otherwise he is dressed as in the first Act. He looks excited.*

ROSMER.

Ah, is it you, Mr. Brendel?

BRENDEL.

Johannes, my boy—hail—and farewell!

ROSMER.

Where are you going so late?

BRENDEL.

Downhill.

ROSMER.

How——?

BRENDEL.

I am going homewards, my beloved pupil. I am home-sick for the mighty Nothingness.

ROSMER.

Something has happened to you, Mr. Brendel! What is it?

BRENDEL.

So you observe the transformation? Yes—well you may. When I last set foot in these halls—I stood before you as a man of substance, and slapped my breast-pocket.

ROSMER.

Indeed! I don't quite understand——

BRENDEL.

But as you see me this night, I am a deposed monarch on the ash-heap that was my palace.

ROSMER.

If there is anything *I* can do for you——

BRENDEL.

You have preserved your child-like heart, Johannes. Can you grant me a loan?

ROSMER.

Yes, yes, most willingly!

BRENDEL.

Can you spare me an ideal or two?

ROSMER.

What do you say?

BRENDEL.

One or two cast-off ideals. It would be an act of charity. For I'm cleaned out, my boy. Ruined, beggared.

REBECCA.

Have you not delivered your lecture?

BRENDEL.

No, seductive lady. What do you think? Just as I am standing ready to pour forth the horn of plenty, I make the painful discovery that I am bankrupt.

REBECCA.

But all your unwritten works——?

BRENDEL.

For five-and-twenty years I have sat like a miser on his double-locked treasure-chest. And then yesterday—when I open it and want to display the treasure—there's none there! The teeth of time had ground it into dust. There was nix and nothing in the whole concern.

ROSMER.

But are you so sure of that?

BRENDEL.

There's no room for doubt, my dear fellow. The President has convinced me of it.

ROSMER.

The President?

BRENDEL.

Well well—His Excellency then. *Ganz nach Belieben.*

ROSMER.

Whom do you mean?

BRENDEL.

Peter Mortensgård, of course.

ROSMER.

What?

BRENDEL.

[*Mysteriously.*] Hush, hush, hush! Peter Mortensgård is the lord and leader of the future. Never have I stood in a more august presence. Peter Mortensgård has the secret of omnipotence. He can do whatever he will.

ROSMER.

Oh, don't believe that.

BRENDEL.

Yes, my boy! For Peter Mortensgård never wills more than he can do. Peter Mortensgård is capable of

living his life without ideals. And t h a t, do you see—t h a t is just the mighty secret of action and of victory. It is the sum of the whole world's wisdom. *Basta!*

ROSMER.

[*In a low voice.*] Now I understand—why you leave here poorer than you came.

BRENDEL.

Bien! Then take a *Beispiel* by your ancient teacher. Rub out all that he once imprinted on your mind. Build not thy house on shifting sand. And look ahead—and feel your way—before you build on this exquisite creature, who here lends sweetness to your life.

REBECCA.

Is it me you mean?

BRENDEL.

Yes, my fascinating mermaid.

REBECCA.

Why am I not to be built on?

BRENDEL.

[*Comes a step nearer.*] I gather that my former pupil has a great cause to carry forward to victory.

REBECCA.

What then——?

BRENDEL.

Victory is assured. But—mark me well—on one indispensable condition.

REBECCA.

Which is——?

BRENDEL.

[*Takes her gently by the wrist.*] That the woman who loves him shall gladly go out into the kitchen and hack off her tender, rosy-white little finger—h e r e—just h e r e at the middle joint. Item, that the aforesaid loving woman —again gladly—shall slice off her incomparably-moulded left ear. [*Lets her go, and turns to* ROSMER.] Farewell, my conquering Johannes.

ROSMER.

Are you going now? In the dark night?

BRENDEL.

The dark night is best. Peace be with you.

[*He goes. There is a short silence in the room.*

REBECCA.

[*Breathes heavily.*] Oh, how close and sultry it is here!

[*Goes to the window, opens it, and remains standing by it.*

ROSMER.

[*Sits down in the arm-chair by the stove.*] There is nothing else for it after all, Rebeccca. I see it. You m u s t go away.

REBECCA.

Yes, I see no choice.

ROSMER.

Let us make the most of our last hour. Come here and sit by me.

REBECCA.

[*Goes and sits on the sofa.*] What do you want to say to me, Rosmer?

ROSMER.

First, I want to tell you that you need not feel any anxiety about your future.

REBECCA.

[*Smiles.*] H'm, my future.

ROSMER.

I have long ago arranged for everything. Whatever may happen, you are provided for.

REBECCA.

That too, my dear one?

ROSMER.

You might surely have known that.

REBECCA.

It is many a long day since I have given a thought to such things.

ROSMER.

Yes, yes—you thought things would always remain as they were between us.

REBECCA.

Yes, I thought so.

ROSMER.

So did I. But if I were to go——

REBECCA.

Oh, Rosmer—you will live longer than I.

ROSMER.

Surely my worthless life lies in my own hands.

REBECCA.

What is this? You are never thinking of——!

ROSMER.

Do you think it would be so strange? After this pitiful, lamentable defeat! I, who was to have borne a great cause on to victory—have I not fled from the battle before it was well begun?

REBECCA.

Take up the fight again, Rosmer! Only try—and you shall see, you will conquer. You will ennoble hundreds —thousands of minds. Only try!

ROSMER.

Oh Rebecca—I, who no longer believe in my own mission!

REBECCA.

But your mission has stood the test already. You have ennobled one human being at least—m e you have ennobled for the rest of my days.

ROSMER.

Oh—if I dared believe you.

REBECCA.

[*Pressing her hands together.*] Oh Rosmer,—do you know of nothing—nothing that could make you believe it?

ROSMER.

[*Starts as if in fear.*] Don't speak of that! Keep away from that, Rebecca! Not a word more.

REBECCA.

Yes, this is precisely what we m u s t speak about. Do you know of anything that would kill the doubt? For *I* know of nothing in the world.

ROSMER.

It is well for you that you do not know.—It is well for both of us.

REBECCA.

No, no, no.—I will not be put off in this way! If you know of anything that would absolve me in your eyes, I claim as my right to be told of it.

ROSMER.

[*As if impelled against his will to speak.*] Then let us see. You say that a great love is in you; that through me your mind has been ennobled. Is it so? Is your reckoning just, Rebecca? Shall we try to prove the sum? Say?

REBECCA.

I am ready.

ROSMER.

At any time?

REBECCA.

Whenever you please. The sooner the better.

ROSMER.

Then let me see, Rebecca,—if you for my sake—this very evening—— [*Breaks off.*] Oh, no, no, no!

REBECCA.

Yes, Rosmer! Yes! Tell me, and you shall see.

ROSMER.

Have you the courage—have you the will—gladly, as Ulric Brendel said—for my sake, to-night—gladly—to go the same way that Beata went?

REBECCA.

[*Rises slowly from the sofa; almost voiceless.*] Rosmer——!

ROSMER.

Yes, Rebecca—that is the question that will for ever haunt me—when you are gone. Every hour in the day it will return upon me. Oh, I seem to see you before my very eyes. You are standing out on the foot-bridge—right in the middle. Now you are bending forward over the railing—drawn dizzily downwards, downwards towards the rushing water! No—you recoil. You have not the heart to do what she dared.

REBECCA.

But if I had the heart to do it? And the will to do it gladly? What then?

ROSMER.

I should have to believe you then. I should recover my faith in my mission. Faith in my power to ennoble human souls. Faith in the human soul's power to attain nobility.

REBECCA.

[*Takes up her shawl slowly, and puts it over her head; says with composure.*] You shall have your faith again.

ROSMER.

Have you the will and the courage—for this, Rebecca?

REBECCA.

That you shall see to-morrow—or afterwards—when they find my body.

ROSMER.

[*Puts his hand to his forehead.*] There is a horrible fascination in this——!

REBECCA.

For I don't want to remain down there. Not longer than necessary. You must see that they find me.

ROSMER.

[*Springs up.*] But all this—is nothing but madness. Go—or stay! I will take your bare word this time too.

REBECCA.

Phrases, Rosmer! Let us have no more cowardly subterfuges, dear! How can you believe me on my bare word after this day?

ROSMER.

I shrink from seeing your defeat, Rebecca!

REBECCA.

It will be no defeat.

ROSMER.

Yes, it will. You will never bring yourself to go Beata's way.

REBECCA.

Do you think not?

ROSMER.

Never! You are not like Beata. You are not under the dominion of a distorted view of life.

REBECCA.

But I am under the dominion of the Rosmersholm view of life—now. What I have sinned—it is fit that I should expiate.

ROSMER.

[*Looks at her fixedly.*] Is t h a t your point of view?

REBECCA.

Yes.

ROSMER.

[*With resolution.*] Well then, *I* stand firm in our emancipated view of life, Rebecca. There is no judge over us; and therefore we must do justice upon ourselves.

REBECCA.

[*Misunderstanding him.*] Yes, that is true—that too. My going away will save what is best in you.

ROSMER.

Oh, there is nothing left to save in me.

REBECCA.

Yes, there is. But I—after to-day, I should only be a sea-troll dragging down the ship that is to carry you forward. I must go overboard. Why should I remain here in the world, trailing after me my own crippled life? Why brood and brood over the happiness that my past has forfeited for ever? I must give up the game, Rosmer.

ROSMER.

If you go—I go with you.

REBECCA.

[*Smiles almost imperceptibly, looks at him, and says more softly.*] Yes, come with me—and see——

ROSMER.

I go with you, I say.

REBECCA.

To the foot-bridge, yes. You know you never dare go out upon it.

ROSMER.

Have you noticed that?

REBECCA.

[*Sadly and brokenly.*] Yes.—It was that that made my love hopeless.

ROSMER.

Rebecca,—now I lay my hand on your head— [*He does so.*]—and I wed you as my true wife.

REBECCA.

[*Takes both his hands, and bows her head towards his breast.*] Thanks, Rosmer. [*Lets him go.*] And now I will go—gladly.

ROSMER.

Man and wife should go together.

REBECCA.

Only to the bridge, Rosmer.

ROSMER.

Out on to it too. As far as you go—so far shall I go with you. For now I dare.

REBECCA.

Are you absolutely certain—that this way is the best for you?

ROSMER.

I am certain that it is the only way.

REBECCA.

If you were deceiving yourself? If it were only a delusion? One of those white horses of Rosmersholm.

ROSMER.

It may be so. For we can never escape from them—we of this house.

REBECCA

Then stay, Rosmer!

ROSMER.

The husband shall go with his wife, as the wife with her husband.

REBECCA.

Yes, but first tell me t h i s: Is it you who follow me? Or is it I who follow you?

ROSMER.

We shall never think that question out.

REBECCA.

But I should like to know.

ROSMER.

We go with each other, Rebecca—I with you, and you with me.

REBECCA.

I almost think that is the truth.

ROSMER.

For now we two are one.

REBECCA.

Yes. We are one. Come! We go gladly.

[*They go out hand in hand through the hall, and are seen to turn to the left. The door remains open.*

[*The room stands empty for a little while. Then the door to the right is opened by* MADAM HELSETH.

MADAM HELSETH.

Miss West—the carriage is—— [*Looks round.*] Not here? Out together at this time of night? Well—I must say——! H'm! [*Goes out into the hall, looks round, and comes in again.*] Not on the garden seat. Ah, well well. [*Goes to the window and looks out.*] Oh good God! that white thing t h e r e——! My soul! They're both of them out on the bridge! God forgive the sinful creatures—if they're not in each other's arms! [*Shrieks aloud.*] Oh—down—both of them! Out into the mill-race! Help! Help! [*Her knees tremble; she holds on to the chair-back, shaking all over; she can scarcely get the words out.*] No. No help here.—The dead wife has taken them.

THE END.

THE LADY FROM THE SEA

THE LADY FROM THE SEA

INTRODUCTION*

IBSEN'S birthplace, Skien, is not on the sea, but at the head of a long and very narrow fiord. At Grimstad, however, and again at Bergen, he had for years lived close to the skerry-bound coast. After he left Bergen, he seldom came in touch with the open sea. The upper part of Christiania Fiord is a mere salt-water lake; and in Germany he never saw the sea, in Italy only on brief visits to Ischia, Sorrento, Amalfi. We find him in 1880,[1] writing to Hegel from Munich: "Of all that I miss down here, I miss the sea most. That is the deprivation to which I can least reconcile myself." Again, in 1885, before the visit which he paid that year to Norway, he writes from Rome to the same correspondent, that he has visions of buying a country-house by the sea, in the neighbourhood of Christiania. "The sight of the sea," he says, "is what I most miss in these regions; and this feeling grows year by year." During the weeks he spent at Molde that year, there can be no doubt that he was gathering, not only the political impressions which he used in *Rosmersholm*, but the impressions of ocean and fiord, and of the tide of European life flowing past, but not mingling

[1] The date is July 16. On March 5 of the same year he had (as we shall see later) written down the first outline of what was afterwards to become *The Lady from the Sea*.

* Copyright, 1907, by Charles Scribner's Sons.

with, the "carp-pond" existence of a small Norwegian town, which he was afterwards to embody in *The Lady from the Sea*. That invaluable bibliographer, Halvorsen, is almost certainly wrong in suggesting that Veblungsnæs, at the head of the Romsdalfiord, is the scene of the play. The "local situation" is much more like that of Molde itself. There Ibsen must frequently have seen the great English tourist steamer gliding noiselessly to its moorings, before proceeding up the fiord to Veblungsnæs, and then, on the following day, slipping out to sea again.

Two years later, in 1887, Ibsen spent the summer at Frederikshavn and at Sæby in the north of Jutland, not far from the Skaw. At Sæby I visited him; and from a letter written at the time I make the following extract: "He said that Fru Ibsen and he had just come from Frederikshavn, which he himself liked very much—he could knock about all day among the shipping, talking to the sailors, and so forth. Besides, he found the neighbourhood of the sea favourable to contemplation and constructive thought. Here, at Sæby, the sea was not so easily accessible. But Fru Ibsen didn't like Frederikshavn because of the absence of pleasant walks about it; so Sæby was a sort of compromise between him and her." I remember that he enlarged to me at great length on the fascination which the sea exercised over him. He was then, he said, "preparing some tomfoolery for next year." On his return to Munich, he put his ideas into shape, and *The Lady from the Sea* was published in November, 1888.

Ibsen wrote few letters while the play was in process of preparation, and none of them contains any note-

worthy reference to it. On the other hand, we possess a very curious first sketch of the story[1] (dated March 5, 1880), which shows in a most interesting fashion how an idea grew in his mind. Abbreviating freely, I will try to indicate the main points of difference between the sketch and the finished play.

The scene of the action was originally conceived as a much smaller town than it ultimately became, shut in and overshadowed by high, abrupt rocks. (Note that when he wrote the sketch Ibsen had not yet visited Molde). There was to be an hotel and a sanatorium, and a good deal of summer gaiety in the place; but the people were to long, in an impotent, will-less fashion, for release from their imprisonment in the "shadow-life" of this remote corner of the world. Through the short summer, they were always to have the long winter impending over them; and this was to be a type of life: "A bright summer day with the great darkness after it—that is all." This motive, though traces of it remain, is much less emphasised than was at first intended.

The characters were to fall into three groups: inhabitants of the town, summer visitors, and passing tourists. The tourists were simply to "come and go, and enter episodically into the action"; but the other two groups are more or less individualised.

The first group is thus described: "The lawyer married, a second time, to the woman from the open sea out-

[1] Published in *Die neue Rundschau*, December, 1906. The *Literary Remains* contain, besides this sketch, a first draft of the play, somewhat fragmentary, yet covering nearly the whole ground, and showing that it underwent no essential remodelling in the course of revision.

side. Has two young but grown-up daughters by his first marriage. Elegant, distinguished, bitter. His past tarnished by an indiscretion. His career thereby cut short. The disreputable signboard-painter with the artist-dreams, happy in his imaginings. The old, married clerk. Has written a play in his youth, which was only once acted.[1] Is for ever touching it up, and lives in the illusion that it will be published and will make a great success. Takes no steps, however, to bring this about. Nevertheless, accounts himself one of the 'literary' class. His wife and children believe blindly in the play. (Perhaps a private tutor, not a clerk.) Tailor Fresvik, the man-midwife of radicalism, who shows his 'emancipation' in ludicrous attempts at debauchery—affairs with other men's wives—talks of divorce and so forth."

We see that, in the course of elaboration, not only the profession, but the character of Wangel was entirely altered. It is noteworthy, by the way, that, with Ibsen, lawyers are always more or less unsympathetic characters (Stensgård, Helmer, Krogstad, Brack) while doctors are more or less sympathetic (Fieldbo, Rank, Stockmann, Relling, Wangel, Herdal). We see, too, how he saved up for seventeen years the character of the clerk-dramatist. Found superfluous in *The Lady from the Sea*, he became the delightful Foldal of *John Gabriel Borkman*. The radical tailor was destined never to come to life; and the

[1] I met in Rome, in 1881–82, when Ibsen was living there, a minor official of the Vatican Library, then a middle-aged man, who had written eighteen or twenty tragedies, all of which I saw in exquisite manuscript. One of them, *Coriolano*, had been acted once, on the day, I think, before the Italian troops entered Rome in 1870. Is it possible that Ibsen, too, had come across this rival dramatist?

characteristics of the "signboard-painter" were divided between Ballested and Lyngstrand.

In the second group, however—that of the summer visitors—the consumptive sculptor Lyngstrand is already pretty completely sketched. The group was also to have included Lyngstrand's "patron" and his patron's wife—a "stupid, uppish, and tactless woman, who wounds the patient sometimes without meaning it, sometimes on purpose." The patron's wife has entirely disappeared from the completed play, while the patron, though mentioned, has not even a name.

But the oddest fact which this sketch brings to light is that Arnholm and the Stranger were formed by the scission, so to speak, of one character, denominated the "Strange Passenger." Ellida[1] was originally to have been a pastor's daughter. She was to have engaged herself secretly to a "young and unprincipled mate"—a midshipman dismissed the navy. This engagement she broke off, partly at her father's command, partly of her own free will, because she could not forgive what she had learnt of the young sailor's past. Then, after her marriage, she came to feel that in her ignorance and prejudice she had been too hard on him, and to believe that "essentially—in her imagination—it was with him that she had led her married life." This is very like the feeling of Ellida in the play; but her story has become much

[1] The name originally assigned her was "Thora." Readers who know anything of Norway will probably realise how absolutely right was the substitution of "Ellida." It is a master-stroke in the art of nomenclature. Boletta was originally called Thea, and afterwards Annette. Hilda first appears under the name of Frida. Arnholm is at first Hesler, and afterwards Arenholdt.

more strange and romantic. It is not quite clear—the sketch being incomplete—whether the ex-midshipman was to have appeared in person. But there was to have been a "Strange Passenger" (so nicknamed by the other summer visitors) who had been in love with Ellida in the old days, and of whom she was now to make a confidant, very much as she does of Arnholm in the play. His character, however, was to have been quite unlike that of Arnholm; he was to have been "bitter, and given to cutting jests"—somewhat reminiscent, in fact, of the Strange Passenger in *Peer Gynt*. Ibsen may have meant that the nickname should be given him in allusion to that figure. We see, at any rate, that the Strange Passenger, in his capacity as Ellida's confidant, became Arnholm, who is not in the least strange; while the strangeness was transferred to Ellida's former lover, who, originally conceived as a comparatively commonplace personage, now became distinctively "the Stranger."

Fragments of dialogue are roughly sketched—especially the young sculptor's story of the shipwreck and of the group it has suggested to him. Ellida's fancy that mankind has taken a wrong turning in developing into land-animals instead of water-animals is rather more carefully worked out in the sketch than in the play. It takes the form of a semi-serious biological theory, not attributed to any particular character: "Why should we belong to the dry land? Why not to the air? Why not to the sea? The common longing for wings—the strange dreams that one can fly and that one does fly without feeling the least surprise at the fact—how is all this to be explained?" The suggestion evidently is that these dreams

are reminiscences of the bird stage in our development; and then the poet goes on to suggest the same explanation of the intense longing for the sea which he attributes to Ellida: "People who are akin to the sea. Bound to the sea. Dependent on the sea. Must get back to it. A fish-species forms the primordial link in the evolutionary chain. Do rudiments of it survive in our nature? In the nature of some of us?" He also indicates a fantasy of floating cities to be towed southwards or northwards according to the season. "To learn to control storms and the weather. Some such glorious time will come. And we—we shall not be there to see it." All this over-luxuriant growth of fantasy has been carefully pruned in the completed play.

The main incidents of the first act are sketched out in a form not very different from that which they ultimately assumed—and there the scenario breaks off.

"The Stranger's dæmonic power over Ellida was suggested," says John Paulsen, "by Welhaven's strange influence over Camilla Wergeland;" while Dr. Brahm asserts "on credible authority" that the incident of the rings thrown into the sea reproduces an episode of Ibsen's own early life in Bergen. Until the "credible authority" is more clearly specified, we need not pin our faith to the latter assertion; but the former receives some confirmation in a letter which Ibsen addressed on May 3, 1889, to the lady whom Paulsen mentions. This was Camilla Collett, born Wergeland, a sister of the great lyric poet, Henrik Wergeland, and the authoress of a book, *From the Camp of the Dumb* (1877) which is said to have greatly influenced Ibsen's attitude towards the woman-

question, and to have stimulated him to the production of *A Doll's House*. I do not know the story of her relation to J. S. C. Welhaven, a distinguished poet, and her brother's chief rival; but it is clear from Ibsen's letter that she was in some way present to his mind during the composition of *The Lady from the Sea*. This is what he wrote: "Allow me to send you a few words of very sincere thanks for your comprehension of *The Lady from the Sea*. I felt pretty sure in advance that from you more than any one else I could rely upon such comprehension; but it gave me inexpressible pleasure to find my hope confirmed by your letter. Yes, there are points of resemblance—indeed many. And you have seen and felt them —points, I mean, which I could arrive at only by divination. But it is now many years since you, in virtue of your spiritual development, began, in one form or another, to make your presence felt in my work." Camilla Collett died in 1895, at the age of eighty-two.

Nowhere has *The Lady from the Sea* proved one of Ibsen's most popular works. It was acted in all the Scandinavian capitals, and in several German cities, in February and March, 1889. The poet himself was present at the first performance at the Royal Theatre, Berlin, on March 4, and afterwards (March 14) at a performance at Weimar, where he was called before the curtain after each act, and received a laurel wreath. In a letter to Hoffory, he expressed himself delighted with the actor who played the Stranger at Weimar; "I could not desire, and could scarcely conceive a better embodiment of the part—a long, gaunt figure, with hawk-like features, piercing black eyes, and a fine, deep, veiled voice." The

play holds the stage here and there in Germany, but is not very frequently acted.

In London, five performances of Mrs. Marx-Aveling's translation were given, under the direction of Dr. Aveling, at Terry's Theatre in May, 1891—the year of the first performance in England of *Ghosts*, *Rosmersholm*, and *Hedda Gabler*. This wholly inadequate production was followed, eleven years later, by a revival at the Royalty Theatre, by the Stage Society, in which Ellida was played by Miss Janet Achurch, and the Stranger by Mr. Laurence Irving. In Paris, an organisation calling itself "Les Escholiers," produced *La Dame de la Mer* in 1892. It was afterwards played, both in Paris and on tour, by the Théâtre de l'Œuvre.

The discovery that *The Lady from the Sea* was planned so early as 1880 is particularly interesting in view of the fact that, in technical concentration, and even, one is inclined to say, in intellectual power, it falls notably below the level of its immediate predecessors, *The Wild Duck* and *Rosmersholm*, and its immediate successors, *Hedda Gabler* and *The Master Builder*. It would scarcely be going too far to call it the weakest thing Ibsen produced between *A Doll's House* and *John Gabriel Borkman*, both inclusive. I well remember the sense of slackening dramatic fibre with which I read it on its first appearance; the fear that age was beginning to tell upon the poet; and the relief with which I found him, in *Hedda Gabler*, once more at the very height of his power. Some readers may take exception to this view, and declare that they prefer *The Lady from the Sea* to several of the plays which I would rank above it. In point of amenity and charm, it

doubtless ranks high among Ibsen's works; its poetic merits are great; but the comparative laxity of its technique seems to me quite unmistakable. The main interest—the Ellida-Wangel interest, let us call it—is constantly being interrupted by two subsidiary interests: the Arnholm-Boletta interest, and the Boletta-Hilda-Lyngstrand interest. These lines of interest touch each other, but are not effectually interwoven. In no other play of Ibsen's, in fact, since *The League of Youth*, is there such a marked sub-plot, or, rather, two sub-plots; and, for my part, judging them by the high Ibsen standard, I find neither of these sub-plots particularly interesting. The main action, on the other hand, is not only interesting but full of psychological truth. Ellida is one of the most living of Ibsen's women. There are few of his heroines whom one has not seen and recognised in real life; but Ellida in particular I happen to have known intimately, though Ibsen never heard of the lady in question. The character of Wangel, too, is not only very amiable, but very closely observed. Yet even in the working out of this main theme, there is, I think, a technical weakness. We feel that, in the decisive scene of the last act, Wangel's mere statement that he sets Ellida free is an insufficient pivot for the revolution which takes place in her mind. Psychologically, no doubt, it is adequate, but dramatically it is ineffective. The poet ought, I suggest, to have devised some more convincing means of bringing home both to her and to us the fact of her manumission.[1]

[1] In the draft, Wangel says at the decisive moment: "It would be easy for me to prevent you from going away with this strange man. I do nothing to prevent you. You are now a free woman, at full liberty to go where you will."

In default of a practical proof, a symbolic indication might have served; but something we want beyond a mere verbal declaration. It may be taken as a technical principle, I believe, that a change of mind on which so much depends ought, for purposes of dramatic effect, to be demonstrated by some outward and visible sign sufficiently cogent to make the audience fully realise and believe in it.

Another technical weakness, more obvious, though perhaps less important, is the astounding coincidence by which Lyngstrand, the one witness to the Stranger's frenzy on reading of Ellida's faithlessness, is made, by pure chance, to encounter Ellida and to tell her the story. This is, I think, the only real abuse of coincidence in Ibsen's modern plays, from *Pillars of Society* onwards.[1] One or two other much slighter coincidences—such as, in *A Doll's House*, Mrs. Linden's former acquaintance with Krogstad—are accounted for by the fact that Norway is a very small country, in which, roughly speaking, every one of the town-dwelling upper and middle class knows, or has heard of, every one else.

As I have pointed out in the introduction to *Rosmersholm*, *The Lady from the Sea* is the first play in which Ibsen entirely abandons social satire and devotes himself to pure psychology. It is also the first play in which he trenches on the occult. He was to go much further in this direction in *The Master Builder* and *Little Eyolf;* but already he pursues the plan, which was also Hawthorne's, of carefully leaving us in doubt as to whether,

[1] It is suggested that the coincidence is to be regarded as part of the "occult" atmosphere of the play. But I doubt whether this was in the poet's mind; and, in any case, the defence does not seem a very good one.

and how far, any supernormal influence is at work. On the whole, however, he probably intends us to conclude that the Stranger's uncanny power over Ellida exists only in her imagination.

THE LADY FROM THE SEA

(1888)

CHARACTERS

DOCTOR WANGEL,[1] *district physician.*
ELLIDA[2] WANGEL, *his second wife.*
BOLETTA } *his daughters by his*
HILDA, *a young girl* } *former marriage.*
ARNHOLM, *a schoolmaster.*
LYNGSTRAND.
BALLESTED.[3]
A STRANGER.
Young Townspeople.
Tourists, etc.

The action takes place in the summer-time, in a small town beside a fiord in Northern Norway.

[1] Pronounce *Vangl.*
[2] Pronounce *El-lee-da,* with accent on the second syllable.
[3] Pronounce *Bal-le-staid.*

THE LADY FROM THE SEA

PLAY IN FIVE ACTS

ACT FIRST

DOCTOR WANGEL'S *house, with a large veranda, on the left. Garden in front and around. Near the veranda, a flag-staff. To the right, in the garden, an arbour, with table and chairs. At the back, a hedge, with a small gate. Beyond the hedge, a road along the shore, shaded by trees on either side. Between the trees there is a view of the fiord, with high mountain ranges and peaks in the distance. It is a warm and brilliantly clear summer morning.*

BALLESTED, *a middle-aged man, dressed in an old velvet jacket and broad-brimmed artist's hat, stands at the foot of the flag-staff, arranging the cord. The flag is lying on the ground. A little way off stands an easel with a stretched canvas. Beside it, on a camp-stool, are brushes, palette, and a paint-box.*

BOLETTA WANGEL *comes out upon the veranda through the open garden-room door. She is carrying a large vase of flowers, which she places upon the table.*

BOLETTA.

Well, Ballested,—can you get it to run?

BALLESTED.

Oh yes, Miss Boletta. It's easy enough.—May I ask if you are expecting visitors to-day?

BOLETTA.

Yes, we expect Mr. Arnholm this morning. He came to town last night.

BALLESTED.

Arnholm? Wait a moment—wasn't Arnholm the name of the tutor you had here some years ago?

BOLETTA.

Yes; it is he that is coming.

BALLESTED.

Ah, indeed. So he is in these parts again?

BOLETTA.

That is why we want the flag run up.

BALLESTED.

Ah, I see, I see.

[BOLETTA *goes into the garden-room again.*

Shortly afterwards, LYNGSTRAND *comes along the road from the right, and stops, interested by the sight of the easel and painter's materials. He is a slightly-built young man, of delicate appearance, poorly but neatly dressed.*

LYNGSTRAND.

[*Outside, by the hedge.*] Good morning.

BALLESTED.

[*Turning round.*] Ah—good morning. [*Hoists the flag.*] So-ho!—up goes the balloon! [*Makes the cord*

fast, and begins to busy himself at the easel.] I take off my hat to you, sir—though I don't think I have the pleasure——

LYNGSTRAND.

You are a painter, are you not?

BALLESTED.

Yes, certainly. Why should I not be a painter?

LYNGSTRAND.

Ah, I can see you are.—Should you mind my coming in for a moment?

BALLESTED.

Do you want to have a look at it?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, I should like to extremely.

BALLESTED.

Oh there's nothing much to see as yet. But pray come in—you're quite welcome.

LYNGSTRAND.

Many thanks. [*He comes in through the garden gate.*

BALLESTED.

[*Painting.*] It's the inner part of the fiord, among the islands, that I am working at.

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, I see.

BALLESTED.

But I haven't put in the figure yet. There is no such thing as a model to be had in the town.

LYNGSTRAND.

There is to be a figure, is there?

BALLESTED.

Yes. By the rock in the foreground here, I mean to have a half-dead mermaid lying.

LYNGSTRAND.

Why half-dead?

BALLESTED.

She has strayed in from the sea, and can't find her way out again. So she lies here dying by inches in the brackish waters, you understand.

LYNGSTRAND.

Oh, that is the idea?

BALLESTED.

It was the lady of this house that suggested it to me.

LYNGSTRAND.

What will you call the picture when it is finished?

BALLESTED.

I think of calling it "The Mermaid's End."

LYNGSTRAND.

Capital.—You are sure to make something good out of this.

BALLESTED.

[*Looking at him.*] An artist yourself, perhaps?

LYNGSTRAND.

A painter, you mean?

BALLESTED.

Yes.

LYNGSTRAND.

No, I am not. But I am going to be a sculptor. My name is Hans Lyngstrand.

BALLESTED.

Going to be a sculptor, are you? Well, well, sculpture, too, is a fine, gentleman-like art.—I fancy I've seen you in the street once or twice. Have you been staying here long?

LYNGSTRAND.

No, I have only been here a fortnight. But I hope I may be able to stay the whole summer.

BALLESTED.

To enjoy the gaieties of the season, eh?

LYNGSTRAND.

Well, rather to get up my strength a bit.

BALLESTED.

Not an invalid, I hope?

LYNGSTRAND.

Well, I'm what you might call a little bit of an invalid. Nothing to speak of, you know. It's only a sort of short-windedness in my chest.

BALLESTED.

Pooh—a mere trifle. Still, I would consult a good doctor, if I were you.

LYNGSTRAND.

I thought, if I could find an opportunity, I might speak to Dr. Wangel.

BALLESTED.

Yes, do. [*Looks out to the left.*] Here comes another steamer. Chock full of passengers. It's extraordinary how the tourist business has increased here during the last few years.

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, there seems to be a continual coming and going.

BALLESTED.

The place is full of summer visitors too. I'm sometimes afraid that our good town may lose its character with all this foreign invasion.

LYNGSTRAND.

Are you a native of the place?

BALLESTED.

No, I am not. But I have accla—acclimatised myself. I have become attached to the place by the bonds of time and habit.

LYNGSTRAND.

You have lived here a long time, then?

BALLESTED.

Well, seventeen or eighteen years. I came here with Skive's[1] dramatic company. But we got into financial difficulties; so the company broke up and was scattered to the winds.

LYNGSTRAND.

But you remained?

BALLESTED.

I remained. And I have had no cause to regret it. You see in those days I was mainly employed as a scene-painter.

BOLETTA *comes out with a rocking-chair, which she places in the veranda.*

BOLETTA.

[*Speaking into the garden-room.*] Hilda,—see if you can find the embroidered footstool for father.

LYNGSTRAND.

[*Approaches the veranda and bows.*] Good morning, Miss Wangel.

[1] Pronounce *Sheevë's.*

BOLETTA.

[*By the balustrade.*] Ah, is that you, Mr. Lyngstrand? Good morning. Excuse me one moment.

[*Goes into the house.*

BALLESTED.

Do you know the family here?

LYNGSTRAND.

Very slightly. I have met the young ladies once or twice at other houses. And I had a little talk with Mrs. Wangel the last time the band played up at the Prospect. She said I might come and see them.

BALLESTED.

I'll tell you what,—you ought to cultivate their acquaintance.

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, I've been thinking of paying them a visit—I mean calling on them, you know. If I could only find some pretext——

BALLESTED.

Oh nonsense,—a pretext—— [*Looks out to the left.*] Confound it all! [*Collects his things.*] The steamer's alongside the pier already. I must be off to the hotel. Perhaps some of the new arrivals may require my services. For I practise as a hair-cutter and *friseur*, too, I must tell you.

LYNGSTRAND

You seem to be very versatile.

BALLESTED.

One must know how to ac—climatise oneself to various professions in these small places. If you should ever require anything in the hair line—pomade or what not—you have only to ask for Dancing-Master Ballested.

LYNGSTRAND.

Dancing-Master——

BALLESTED.

President of the Musical Society, if you prefer it. We give a concert up at the Prospect this evening. Good-bye, good-bye.

[*He goes with his painting materials through the garden gate, and then out to the left.*

HILDA *comes out with the stool.* BOLETTA *brings more flowers.* LYNGSTRAND *bows to* HILDA *from the garden.*

HILDA.

[*By the balustrade, without returning the bow.*] Boletta said you had ventured in to-day.

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, I took the liberty of coming into the garden.

HILDA.

Have you been out for your morning walk?

LYNGSTRAND.

Well, no,—I haven't had much of a walk to-day.

HILDA.

Have you been bathing then?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, I had a little dip. I saw your mother down there. She was just going into her bathing-house.

HILDA.

Who was?

LYNGSTRAND.

Your mother.

HILDA.

Oh indeed.

[*She places the stool in front of the rocking-chair.*

BOLETTA.

[*As if to change the subject.*] Did you see anything of my father's boat out on the fiord?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, I saw a sailing-boat that seemed to be standing inwards.

BOLETTA.

That must have been father. He has been out visiting patients on the islands.

[*She arranges things about the table.*

LYNGSTRAND.

[*Standing on the lowest of the veranda steps.*] Why, what a splendid show of flowers you have here——!

BOLETTA.

Yes, doesn't it look nice?

LYNGSTRAND.

Oh, charming. It looks as if the day were some family festival.

HILDA.

So it is.

LYNGSTRAND.

I guessed as much. Your father's birthday, I suppose?

BOLETTA.

[*Warningly to* HILDA.] H'm,—h'm!

HILDA.

[*Not heeding her.*] No, mother's

LYNGSTRAND.

Oh indeed,—your mother's, is it?

BOLETTA.

[*In a low, angry tone.*] Now, Hilda——!

HILDA.

[*In the same tone.*] Let me alone! [*To* LYNGSTRAND.] I suppose you're going home to lunch now?

LYNGSTRAND.

[*Descending from the step.*] Yes, I suppose I must see about getting something to eat.

HILDA.

I daresay you live on the fat of the land at the hotel.

LYNGSTRAND.

I am not staying at the hotel now. It was too expensive for me.

HILDA.

Where are you now, then?

LYNGSTRAND.

I have a room at Madam Jensen's.[1]

HILDA.

Which Madam Jensen's?

LYNGSTRAND.

The midwife's.

HILDA.

Excuse me, Mr. Lyngstrand, but I really have no time to——

LYNGSTRAND.

Oh, I suppose I oughtn't to have said that.

HILDA.

Said what?

LYNGSTRAND.

What I said just now.

[1] Pronounce *Yensen*.

HILDA.

[*Looks at him witheringly from top to toe.*] I don't in the least understand you.

LYNGSTRAND.

No, no. Well, I must bid you good-bye for the present, ladies.

BOLETTA.

[*Comes forward to the steps.*] Good-bye, good-bye, Mr. Lyngstrand. You must please excuse us for to-day.—But another time, when you have nothing better to do—and when you feel inclined,—I hope you'll look in and see father and—and the rest of us.

LYNGSTRAND.

Many thanks. I shall be only too delighted.

[*He bows and goes out by the garden gate. As he passes along the road outside, to the left, he bows again towards the veranda.*

HILDA.

[*Under her breath.*] Adieu, Mossyoo! My love to Mother Jensen.

BOLETTA.

[*Softly, shakes her by the arm.*] Hilda——! You naughty child! Are you mad? He might easily hear you!

HILDA.

Pooh,—do you think I care?

BOLETTA.

[*Looks out to the right.*] Here comes father.

DOCTOR WANGEL, *in travelling dress, and carrying a hand-bag, comes along the foot-path from the right.*

WANGEL.

Well, here I am again, little girls!
[*He comes in through the gate.*

BOLETTA.

[*Goes down to meet him in the garden.*] Oh, I'm so glad you have come.

HILDA.

[*Also going down to him.*] Have you finished for the day now, father?

WANGEL.

Oh no, I must go down to the surgery for a little while by-and-by.—Tell me,—do you know whether Arnholm has arrived?

BOLETTA.

Yes, he came last night. We sent to the hotel to inquire.

WANGEL.

Then you haven't seen him yet?

BOLETTA.

No. But he's sure to look in this forenoon.

WANGEL.

Yes, of course he will.

HILDA.

[*Drawing him round.*] Father you must look about you now.

WANGEL.

[*Looking towards the veranda.*] Yes, yes, my child, I see.—There is quite an air of festivity about the place.

BOLETTA.

Don't you think we have arranged it prettily?

WANGEL.

Yes, you have indeed—Is—are we alone in the house?

HILDA.

Yes, she has gone to——

BOLETTA.

[*Interrupts quickly.*] Mother is bathing.

WANGEL.

[*Looks kindly at* BOLETTA *and pats her head. Then he says, with some hesitation:*] Look here, little girls—do you intend to keep up this display all day? And the flag flying too?

HILDA.

Why, of course we do, father!

WANGEL.

H'm—yes. But you see——

BOLETTA.

[*Nodding and smiling to him.*] Of course you understand that it's all in honour of Mr. Arnholm. When such an old friend comes to pay his first visit to you——

HILDA.

[*Smiling and shaking him.*] Remember—wasn't he Boletta's tutor, father?

WANGEL.

[*Half smiling.*] You are a pair of young rogues.—Well well,—after all, it's only natural that we should remember her who is no longer among us. But all the same——. Look here, Hilda. [*Gives her his hand-bag.*] This must go down to the surgery.—No, little girls,—I don't like all this—the manner of it, I mean. That we should make a practice every year of——. Well, what can one say? I suppose there is no other way of doing it.

HILDA.

[*Is about to go through the garden to the left with the hand-bag, but stops, turns, and points.*] Look at that gentleman coming along the road. I believe it's Mr. Arnholm.

BOLETTA.

[*Looks in the same direction.*] He! [*Laughs.*] What an absurd idea! To take that middle-aged man for Mr. Arnholm.

WANGEL.

Wait a bit, child. Upon my life, I believe it's he!—Yes, I am sure of it!

BOLETTA.

[*Gazing fixedly, in quiet astonishment.*] Yes, I do believe it is!

ARNHOLM, *in elegant morning dress, with gold spectacles and a light cane, appears on the road, coming from the left. He looks somewhat overworked. On seeing the party in the garden, he bows in a friendly way, and comes through the gate.*

WANGEL.

[*Going to meet him.*] Welcome my dear Arnholm! Heartily welcome to your old haunts again.

ARNHOLM.

Thank you, thank you, Doctor Wangel. A thousand thanks. [*They shake hands and cross the garden together.*] And here are the children! [*Holds out his hands to them and looks at them.*] These two I should scarcely have known again.

WANGEL.

No, I daresay not.

ARNHOLM.

Oh well,—perhaps Boletta.—Yes, I should have known Boletta.

WANGEL.

Scarcely, I think. Let me see, it's eight or nine years since you saw her last. Ah yes, there has been many a change here since then.

ARNHOLM.

[*Looking about him.*] I should hardly say so. Except that the trees have grown a bit—and you have planted a new arbour there——

WANGEL.

Oh no, outwardly I daresay.

ARNHOLM.

[*Smiles.*] And now, of course, you have two grown-up daughters in the house.

WANGEL.

Oh, only one grown-up, surely.

HILDA.

[*Half-aloud.*] Just listen to father!

WANGEL.

And now suppose we sit in the veranda. It's cooler there than here. Come along.

ARNHOLM.

Thanks, thanks, my dear Doctor.

[*They go up the steps.* WANGEL *gives* ARNHOLM *the rocking-chair.*

WANGEL.

That's right. Now you shall just sit quiet and have a good rest. You are looking rather tired after your journey.

ARNHOLM.

Oh, that's nothing. Now that I am here again——

BOLETTA.

[*To* WANGEL.] Shall we bring a little soda-water and syrup into the garden-room? It will soon be too warm out here.

WANGEL.

Yes do, little girls. Soda-water and syrup. And perhaps a little cognac.

BOLETTA.

Cognac too?

WANGEL.

Just a little. In case any one should care for it.

BOLETTA.

Very well. Hilda, will you take the hand-bag down to the surgery?

BOLETTA *goes into the garden-room and closes the door after her.* HILDA *takes the bag and, going through the garden, disappears behind the house to the left.*

ARNHOLM.

[*Who has been following* BOLETTA *with his eyes.*] What a splendid girl—what splendid girls they have grown into!

WANGEL.

[*Seats himself.*] Yes, don't you think so?

ARNHOLM.

Boletta quite astonishes me—and Hilda too, for that matter.—But you yourself, my dear Doctor—do you intend to remain here for the rest of your days?

WANGEL.

Oh yes, that's what it will come to, I suppose. I was born and bred here, you see. Here I lived very very happily with her who was so early taken from us—with her whom you knew when you were here before, Arnholm.

ARNHOLM.

Yes—yes.

WANGEL.

And now I live here so happily with one who has come to me in her stead. I must say that, take it all in all, the fates have been kind to me.

ARNHOLM.

You have no children by your second marriage?

WANGEL.

We had a little boy, two or two and a half years ago. But we did not keep him long. He died when he was four or five months old.

ARNHOLM.

Is your wife not at home to-day?

WANGEL.

Oh yes, she'll be here very soon. She has gone to bathe. She never misses a day at this season; no matter what the weather may be.

ARNHOLM.

Is she out of health?

WANGEL.

No, not exactly; but she has been curiously nervous the last couple of years or so—off and on, you know. I can't quite make out what is wrong with her. But to get into the sea is life and happiness to her.

ARNHOLM.

I remember that of old.

WANGEL.

[*With an almost imperceptible smile.*] Yes, to be sure, you knew Ellida when you were tutor out at Skioldvik.[1]

ARNHOLM.

Of course. She often visited at the parsonage. And I used generally to see her when I went to the lighthouse to have a talk with her father.

WANGEL.

Her life out there has left a deep impression upon her, as you may imagine. In town here people can't understand it at all. They call her "the lady from the sea."

ARNHOLM.

Do they?

WANGEL.

Yes. And look here—speak to her about the old days, my dear Arnholm. I am sure it will do her good.

[1] Pronounce *Sholdveek*.

ARNHOLM.

[*Looking doubtfully at him.*] Have you any particular reason to think so?

WANGEL.

Yes, certainly I have.

ELLIDA'S VOICE.

[*Heard without, in the garden to the right.*] Are you there, Wangel?

WANGEL.

[*Rising.*] Yes, dear.

MRS. WANGEL *with a large light cloak round her, and with wet hair hanging loose over her shoulders, comes from among the trees beside the arbour.* ARNHOLM *rises.*

WANGEL.

[*Smiling and stretching out his hands towards her.*] Ah, here comes the mermaid!

ELLIDA.

[*Hastens up to the veranda and seizes his hands.*] Thank heaven, you're safe home again! When did you come?

WANGEL.

Just now—a few moments ago. [*Points to* ARNHOLM.] But have you nothing to say to an old acquaintance——?

ELLIDA.

[*Holds out her hand to* ARNHOLM.] So you have really come then? Welcome! And forgive my not being at home——

ARNHOLM.

Oh, don't mention it. Pray don't stand on ceremony——

WANGEL.

Was the water nice and cool to-day?

ELLIDA.

Cool! Why, the water never is cool here—so tepid and flat. Pah! the water is sickly in here in the fiords.

ARNHOLM.

Sickly?

ELLIDA.

Yes, sickly. And I believe it makes one sickly too.

WANGEL.

[*Smiling.*] A nice testimonial for a sea-bathing place.

ARNHOLM.

I should rather say that you, Mrs. Wangel, stand in a peculiar relation to the sea and all that belongs to it.

ELLIDA.

Well, you may be right. I almost think so myself. But do you see how the girls have been decorating the place in your honour?

WANGEL.

[*Embarrassed.*] H'm. [*Looks at his watch.*] I'm afraid I must be going——

ARNHOLM.

Is it really in my honour?

ELLIDA.

Why, of course it is. We're not so fine as this every day.—Pah! How suffocatingly hot it is under this roof! [*Goes down into the garden.*] Come over here! Here there's a breath of air to be had at any rate.

[*She seats herself in the arbour.*

ARNHOLM.

[*Goes to her.*] Now I should say the air was distinctly fresh here.

ELLIDA.

Yes, you are used to the close air of Christiania. I'm told it is perfectly dreadful there in summer.

WANGEL.

[*Who has also come down into the garden.*] Ellida dear, I must leave you to entertain our good friend here for a while.

ELLIDA.

Have you work to do?

WANGEL.

Yes, I must go down to the surgery: and then I must change my clothes. But I shan't be long——

ARNHOLM.

[*Seats himself in the arbour.*] Don't hurry, my dear Doctor. Your wife and I will manage to pass the time.

WANGEL.

Ah yes—I'm sure of that. Well, good-bye for the present then?

[*He goes out through the garden to the left.*

ELLIDA.

[*After a short silence.*] Don't you think it is nice sitting here?

ARNHOLM.

I think it is very nice.

ELLIDA.

This is called my summer-house; for it was I that had it built. Or rather Wangel—to please me.

ARNHOLM.

And you sit here a good deal?

ELLIDA.

Yes, I pass most of the day here.

ARNHOLM.

With the girls, I suppose.

ELLIDA.

No, the girls—they keep to the veranda.

ARNHOLM.

And Wangel?

ELLIDA.

Oh, Wangel goes to and fro. Sometimes he is here with me, and sometimes over there with the children.

ARNHOLM.

Is it you that have arranged things so?

ELLIDA.

I think it's the arrangement that suits us all best. We can speak across to each other now and again—whenever we happen to have anything to say.

ARNHOLM.

[*After a reflective pause.*] When last I crossed your path—out at Skioldvik, I mean——. H'm—that's a long time ago——

ELLIDA.

It is a good ten years since you were out there with us.

ARNHOLM.

Yes, about that. But when I remember you out at the lighthouse——! "The heathen," as the old pastor used to call you, because he said your father had had you christened with the name of a ship and not of a Christian——

ELLIDA.

Well, what then?

ARNHOLM.

The last thing I should have expected was to meet you again, here, as Mrs. Wangel.

ELLIDA.

No, at that time Wangel was not yet a—— The girls' first mother was living then—their own mother, I mean——

ARNHOLM.

Of course, of course. But even if it had not been so—even if he had had no ties—I should never have expected this to come to pass.

ELLIDA.

Nor I. Never in this world—at that time.

ARNHOLM.

Wangel is such a fine fellow; so upright, so genuinely good-hearted, and kind to every one——

ELLIDA.

[*Warmly and cordially.*] Yes, indeed he is!

ARNHOLM.

——but he must be so utterly different from you, I should think.

ELLIDA.

You are right there too; we a r e different.

ARNHOLM.

Well then, how did it come about? How was it?

ELLIDA.

You mustn't ask me, my dear Arnholm. I shouldn't be able to explain it to you. And even if I did, you could never really understand a word of my explanation.

ARNHOLM.

H'm—— [*A little more softly.*] Have you ever told your husband anything about me? I mean, of course, about the unsuccessful step which—I was once rash enough to take.

ELLIDA.

No. How can you think I would? I have never said a word to him—about what you allude to.

ARNHOLM.

I am glad of that. I felt a little embarrassed at the thought that——

ELLIDA.

You need not at all. I have only told him what is true—that I liked you very much, and that you were the truest and best friend I had out there.

ARNHOLM.

Thank you for that. But now tell me—why have you never written to me since I left?

ELLIDA.

I thought it might perhaps be painful to you to hear from one who—who could not meet your wishes. It would have been like opening an old wound, I thought.

ARNHOLM.

H'm—— Well, well, I daresay you were right.

ELLIDA.

But why did y o u never write?

ARNHOLM.

[*Looks at her and smiles half reproachfully.*] I? I begin? And perhaps be suspected of wishing to reopen the attack? After meeting with such a rebuff?

ELLIDA.

Oh no, I can understand that too.—Have you never thought of forming some other tie?

ARNHOLM.

Never. I have remained faithful to my memories.

ELLIDA.

[*Half-joking.*] Oh, nonsense! Let those sad old memories go. I am sure you had much better think about getting happily married.

ARNHOLM.

Then I have no time to lose, Mrs. Wangel. Remember—I blush to say it—I shall never see seven-and-thirty again.

ELLIDA.

Well then, all the more reason to make haste. [*Is silent for a moment, then says earnestly and in a low tone.*] But listen now, my dear Arnholm,—I am going to tell

you something I could not have told you at that time, to save my life.

ARNHOLM.

What may that be?

ELLIDA.

When you took—that unsuccessful step, as you said just now,—I could not answer you otherwise than I did.

ARNHOLM.

I know that. You had nothing but friendship to offer me. I quite understand that.

ELLIDA.

But you do not know that my whole mind and all my thoughts were centred elsewhere at that time?

ARNHOLM.

At that time?

ELLIDA.

Yes, just then.

ARNHOLM.

But that is impossible! You are mistaking the time! I don't believe you knew Wangel then.

ELLIDA.

It is not Wangel that I am speaking of.

ARNHOLM.

Not Wangel? But at that time—out at Skioldvik—I don't remember another creature that I could conceive your caring for.

ELLIDA.

No, no,—I daresay not. For the whole thing was such utter madness.

ARNHOLM.

Do tell me more about this!

ELLIDA.

Oh, it is enough for you to know that I was not free at that time. And now you d o know it.

ARNHOLM.

And if you h a d been free at that time?

ELLIDA.

What then?

ARNHOLM.

Would your answer to my letter have been different?

ELLIDA.

How can I tell? When Wangel came, my answer was different.

ARNHOLM.

Then what is the use of telling me that you were not free?

ELLIDA.

[*Rises, as if in distress and agitation.*] Because I must have some one I can speak to about it. No, no, don't rise.

ARNHOLM.

Your husband, then, knows nothing of the matter?

ELLIDA.

I told him from the first that my thoughts had once been drawn elsewhere. He has never wanted to know more. We have never touched upon the subject since. After all, it was nothing but a piece of madness; and then it all came to an end so quickly. At least,—in a way.

ARNHOLM.

[*Rising.*] Only in a way? Not entirely?

ELLIDA.

Oh yes, of course! My dear good Arnholm, it is not at all as you suppose. It's something quite incomprehensible. I don't think I could find words to tell you of it. You would only think I was ill—or else that I was stark mad.

ARNHOLM.

My dear Mrs. Wangel—now you must and shall tell me the whole story.

ELLIDA.

Well then—I suppose I must try. How should you, with your common sense, ever be able to understand that—— [*Looks out and breaks off.*] Wait—another time—here is some one coming.

LYNGSTRAND *appears on the road, from the left, and enters the garden. He has a flower in his button-hole, and carries a large handsome bouquet, wrapped round with paper and tied with ribbons. He stops, hesitating a little, in front of the veranda.*

ELLIDA.

[*Coming forward in the arbour.*] Is it the girls you are looking for, Mr. Lyngstrand?

LYNGSTRAND.

[*Turning.*] Ah, are you there, Mrs. Wangel? [*Bows and approaches.*] No, not exactly—it wasn't the young ladies. It was you yourself, Mrs. Wangel. You gave me permission to come and see you——

ELLIDA.

Yes, of course I did. You are always welcome here.

LYNGSTRAND.

Many thanks. I fortunately happened to hear that this was a day of rejoicing in the family——

ELLIDA.

Ah, so you know that?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes; and so I make so bold as to offer you this, Mrs. Wangel—— [*He bows and holds out the bouquet.*

ELLIDA.

[*Smiles.*] But, my dear Mr. Lyngstrand, ought you not to give your beautiful flowers to Mr. Arnholm himself? For it's in his honour that——

LYNGSTRAND.

[*Looks in bewilderment from one to the other.*] I beg your pardon—I don't know this gentleman. It's

only——. I meant them for a birthday gift, Mrs. Wangel.

ELLIDA.

A birthday gift? Then you have made a mistake, Mr. Lyngstrand. To-day is not the birthday of any one in this house.

LYNGSTRAND.

[*Smiling quietly.*] Oh, I know all about it. But I didn't know it was such a secret.

ELLIDA.

What is it you know?

LYNGSTRAND.

That it's your birthday, Mrs. Wangel——

ELLIDA.

Mine?

ARNHOLM.

[*Looking at her inquiringly.*] To-day? No, surely not.

ELLIDA.

[*To* LYNGSTRAND.] What has put that into your head?

LYNGSTRAND.

It was Miss Hilda that let it out. I happened to look in a little while ago, and I asked the young ladies why they had made such a grand display of flowers and flags——

ELLIDA.

Well?

LYNGSTRAND.

——and Miss Hilda answered: "Oh, because it's mother's birthday."

ELLIDA.

Mother's——! Oh indeed.

ARNHOLM.

Aha!

[*He and* ELLIDA *exchange glances of comprehension.*

ARNHOLM.

Well, since the young man has found it out, Mrs. Wangel——

ELLIDA.

[*To* LYNGSTRAND.] Yes, since you have found it out——

LYNGSTRAND.

[*Offers the bouquet again.*] May I be permitted to offer my congratulations——?

ELLIDA.

[*Taking the flowers.*] Many thanks.—Won't you sit down a moment, Mr. Lyngstrand?

[ELLIDA, ARNHOLM, *and* LYNGSTRAND *seat themselves in the arbour.*

ELLIDA.

All this about—about my birthday—was to have been a secret, Mr. Arnholm.

ARNHOLM.

So I see. It was not to have been mentioned to us outsiders.

ELLIDA.

[*Lays the bouquet on the table.*] No, just so. Not to outsiders.

LYNGSTRAND.

I promise faithfully I won't mention it to a living creature.

ELLIDA.

Oh, I didn't mean it in that way.—But how are you now? I think you are looking better than you did.

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, I think I am getting on quite well. And next year, if I can get to the south——

ELLIDA.

The girls tell me you hope to manage it.

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes; you see I have a patron in Bergen who provides for me; and he has promised to let me go next year.

ELLIDA.

How did you come across him?

LYNGSTRAND.

Oh, it was a great stroke of luck. I once went a voyage in one of his ships.

ELLIDA.

Did you? Then at that time you wanted to be a sailor?

LYNGSTRAND.

No, not in the least. But after my mother died, my father wouldn't have me hanging about at home; so he sent me to sea. On the voyage home, we were wrecked in the English Channel; and that was a grand thing for me.

ARNHOLM.

How do you mean?

LYNGSTRAND.

It was in the wreck that I got my lesion—this weakness in my chest, you know. I was in the ice-cold water so long before they came and rescued me. So then I had to give up the sea—Oh yes, it was a great stroke of luck.

ARNHOLM.

Indeed? You think so?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes; for the lesion is nothing to speak of; and now I am to have my heart's desire, and to be a sculptor. Only think—to be able to model in the delicate clay that yields so exquisitely under your fingers!

ELLIDA.

And what are you going to model? Mermen and mermaids? Or is it to be old vikings——?

LYNGSTRAND.

No, nothing of that kind. As soon as I can manage it, I mean to have a try at a big piece of work—a group, as they call it.

ELLIDA.

I see. And what is the group to represent?

LYNGSTRAND.

Oh, I thought of something out of my own experience.

ARNHOLM.

Yes yes,—by all means stick to that.

ELLIDA.

But what is it to be?

LYNGSTRAND.

Well, I had thought of a young woman, a sailor's wife, lying and sleeping in a strange unrest, and dreaming as she sleeps. I think I can make it so that any one can see she is dreaming.

ARNHOLM.

And is that all?

LYNGSTRAND.

No. There is to be one other figure—a kind of shape you might call it. It is the husband she has been unfaithful to while he was away. And now he is drowned.

ARNHOLM.

Why, what do you mean——?

ELLIDA.

Drowned you say?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, he is drowned at sea. But the strange thing is that he has come home nevertheless. It's in the night-time; and there he stands by her bedside and looks at her. He must be dripping wet, just as when they haul you up out of the sea.

ELLIDA.

[*Leaning back in her chair.*] What a strange idea! [*Closes her eyes.*] Oh, I can see it livingly before my eyes.

ARNHOLM.

But in the name of all that's wonderful, Mr. ——! Mr. ——! You said it was to be something out of your own experience?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes,—this is out of my own experience; in a sense, that's to say.

ARNHOLM.

You have seen a dead man come——?

LYNGSTRAND.

Well, I don't mean to say I have actually seen it; not outwardly, of course. But all the same——

ELLIDA.

[*With animation and eagerness.*] Tell me all you know about this! I want to understand it thoroughly.

ARNHOLM.

[*Smiling.*] Yes, of course this is quite in your line—anything with the glamour of the sea about it.

ELLIDA.

How was it then, Mr. Lyngstrand?

LYNGSTRAND.

Well, you see, when we were starting for home in the brig, from a town they call Halifax, we had to leave our boatswain behind us in the hospital; so we shipped an American in his place. This new boatswain——

ELLIDA.

The American?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes;—one day he borrowed from the captain a bundle of old newspapers, and was perpetually poring over them. He wanted to learn Norwegian, he said.

ELLIDA.

Well; and then?

LYNGSTRAND.

Well, one evening it was blowing great guns. All hands were on deck—all except the boatswain and me. For he had sprained his ankle and couldn't walk; and I wasn't very well, and was lying in my bunk. Well, there he sat in the fo'c'sle, reading away as usual at one of the old papers——

ELLIDA.

Well? well?

LYNGSTRAND.

When all of a sudden, I heard him give a kind of a roar; and when I looked at him I saw that his face was as white as chalk. Then he set to work to crumple and crush the paper up, and tear it into a thousand little pieces; but that he did quietly, quietly.

ELLIDA.

Did he say nothing at all? Did he not speak?

LYNGSTRAND.

Not at first. But presently he said, as if to himself: "Married—to another man—while I was away."

ELLIDA.

[*Shuts her eyes, and says half to herself:*] Did he say that?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes; and would you believe it—he said it in perfectly good Norwegian. He must have had a great gift for languages, that man.

ELLIDA.

And what then? What happened next?

LYNGSTRAND.

Now comes the wonderful part of it—a thing I shall never forget to my dying day. For he added,—and this quite quietly too: "But mine she is, and mine she shall remain. And follow me she shall, though I should have to go home and fetch her, as a drowned man from the bottom of the sea."

ELLIDA.

[*Pouring out a glass of water; her hand shakes.*] Pah—how close it is to-day——!

LYNGSTRAND.

And he said it with such force of will that I felt he was the man to do it too.

ELLIDA.

Do you know at all—what has become of this man?

LYNGSTRAND.

Oh he's dead, Mrs. Wangel, beyond a doubt.

ELLIDA.

[*Hastily.*] What makes you think that?

LYNGSTRAND.

We were shipwrecked afterwards in the Channel, you know. I got off in the long-boat with the captain and five others; but the mate went in the dingey, and with him was the American and one man besides.

ELLIDA.

And nothing has been heard of them since?

LYNGSTRAND.

No, not a word, Mrs. Wangel. My patron wrote me so, only the other day. And that is the very reason I am

so anxious to make a group of it. I can see the sailor's faithless wife so life-like before me; and then the avenger, who is drowned, but nevertheless comes home from sea. I have them both before my eyes as distinctly as possible.

ELLIDA.

So have I. [*Rising.*] Come,—let us go in. Or rather down to Wangel! It seems to me so stifling here.

[*She comes out of arbour.*

LYNGSTRAND.

[*Who has also risen.*] I think I must be going now. I only just looked in to wish you many happy returns of the day.

ELLIDA.

Well, if you must go—— [*Holds out her hand.*] Good-bye, and thanks for the flowers.

[LYNGSTRAND *bows and goes through the garden gate, out to the left.*

ARNHOLM.

[*Rises and goes up to* ELLIDA.] I can see that this has pained you deeply, my dear Mrs. Wangel.

ELLIDA.

Oh yes, I suppose you may put it so, although——

ARNHOLM.

But after all, it is only what you must have been prepared for.

ELLIDA.

[*Looks at him in surprise.*] Prepared for?

ARNHOLM.

Yes, so I should think.

ELLIDA.

Prepared for his returning——? Returning in such a way?

ARNHOLM.

Why, what in the world——! Is it that crazy sculptor's cock-and-bull story——?

ELLIDA.

Ah, my dear Arnholm, he is perhaps not so crazy as you think.

ARNHOLM.

Can it be this nonsense about the dead man that has moved you so much? I thought it was——

ELLIDA.

What did you think?

ARNHOLM.

Of course, I thought that was only a blind on your part. I fancied you were pained by the discovery that a family anniversary was being celebrated without your knowledge—that your husband and his children are living a life of memories in which you have no share.

ELLIDA.

Oh no, no; that must be as it may. I have no right to claim my husband for myself alone.

ARNHOLM.

Yet it seems to me you ought to have that right.

ELLIDA.

Yes; but as a matter of fact I haven't. That is the thing. I too live a life—in which the others have no part.

ARNHOLM.

You! [*More softly.*] Am I to understand that—you—you do not really love your husband?

ELLIDA.

Oh yes, yes—I have come to love him with my whole heart! And that is just why it is so terrible—so inexplicable—so absolutely inconceivable——!

ARNHOLM.

Now you must tell me all your troubles without reserve! Will you not, Mrs. Wangel?

ELLIDA.

I cannot, dear friend—not now, at any rate. Sometime, perhaps.

[BOLETTA *comes out by the veranda, and down into the garden.*

BOLETTA.

Father is coming from the surgery now. Shan't we all sit together in the garden-room?

ELLIDA.

Yes, let us.

WANGEL, *who has changed his clothes, comes with* HILDA *from the left, behind the house.*

WANGEL.

Well now, here I am, a free man! A glass of something cool wouldn't come amiss now.

ELLIDA.

Wait a moment.

[*She returns to the arbour and brings out the bouquet.*

HILDA.

Oh I say! All those lovely flowers! Where did you get them?

ELLIDA.

I got them from Lyngstrand the sculptor, my dear Hilda.

HILDA.

[*Starting.*] From Lyngstrand?

BOLETTA.

[*Uneasily.*] Has Lyngstrand been here—again?

ELLIDA.

[*With a half-smile.*] Yes. He came to bring this bouquet,—a birthday offering, you know.

BOLETTA.

[*Glancing at* HILDA.] Oh——!

HILDA.

[*Mutters.*] The beast!

WANGEL.

[*In painful embarrassment, to* ELLIDA.] H'm——. Well, you see—I must tell you, my darling Ellida——

ELLIDA.

[*Interrupting.*] Come along, girls! Let us put my flowers in water, with the others.

[*She goes up on to the veranda.*

BOLETTA.

[*Softly to* HILDA.] She is really good after all, you see.

HILDA.

[*Half aloud, looking angry.*] Monkey-tricks! She's only putting it on to please father.

WANGEL.

[*Up on the veranda, presses* ELLIDA'S *hand.*] Thank you—thank you——! I thank you from my heart for this, Ellida.

ELLIDA.

[*Arranging the flowers.*] Oh, nonsense,—why should I not join with you in keeping—mother's birthday?

ARNHOLM.

H'm——!

[*He goes up to* WANGEL *and* ELLIDA. BOLETTA *and* HILDA *remain below in the garden.*

ACT SECOND

Up at the Prospect, a wooded height behind the town. Towards the back stand a landmark and a weather-vane. Large stones for seats are placed round the landmark and in the foreground. Far below in the background the outer fiord is seen, with islands and jutting promontories. The open sea is not visible. A summer night with clear twilight. There is a tinge of orange in the upper air and over the mountain peaks in the far distance. The sound of quartette-singing is faintly heard from the lower slopes on the right.

Young people from the town, ladies and gentlemen, come in couples up from the right, pass the landmark conversing familiarly, and go out to the left. Shortly afterwards BALLESTED *appears, acting as guide to a party of foreign tourists. He is loaded with the ladies' shawls and satchels.*

BALLESTED.

[*Pointing upward with his stick.*] *Sehen Sie, meine Herrschaften*—over *dort liegt eine andere* height. *Das willen wir besteigen* too, *un herunter*——

[*He continues in English, and leads the party out to the right.*

HILDA *comes quickly up the slope on the right, stops, and looks backward. Presently* BOLETTA *comes up the same way.*

BOLETTA.

My dear Hilda, why should we run away from Lyngstrand?

HILDA.

Because I can't endure to walk up hill so slowly. Look—look at him crawling up.

BOLETTA.

Oh, you know how ill he is.

HILDA.

Do you think it's very serious?

BOLETTA.

Yes, I am sure it is.

HILDA.

He consulted father this afternoon. I wonder what father thinks of him.

BOLETTA.

Father told me that he has a hardening of the lungs—or something of that sort. He won't last very long, father says.

HILDA.

Did he really say so? Well now, that's exactly what I've been thinking.

BOLETTA.

But for heaven's sake don't let him suspect anything.

HILDA.

Oh, how can you think I would. [*In a lower tone.*] There!—now Hans has managed to clamber up. Hans——! Can't you see by the look of him that his name is Hans?

BOLETTA.

[*Whispers.*] Do be good now! I warn you!

LYNGSTRAND *enters from the right, a parasol in his hand.*

LYNGSTRAND.

I must beg your pardon, young ladies, for not being able to keep up with you.

HILDA.

So you have a got a parasol now?

LYNGSTRAND.

It's your mother's. She said I might use it for a stick, as I hadn't brought one with me.

BOLETTA.

Are they still down there? Father and the others?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes. Your father went into the restaurant for a moment, and the others are sitting outside listening to the music; but they'll come up by-and-by, your mother said.

HILDA.

[*Who is standing looking at him.*] I suppose you are very tired now?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, I almost think I a m a little tired. I really believe I must sit down a bit.

[*He seats himself on a stone, in front to the right.*

HILDA.

[*Stands before him.*] Do you know that there's to be dancing presently, down by the band-stand?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, I heard something of it.

HILDA.

I suppose you are very fond of dancing.

BOLETTA.

[*Who is wandering about picking small flowers among the heather.*] Oh, Hilda—let Mr. Lyngstrand get his breath.

LYNGSTRAND.

[*To* HILDA.] Yes, Miss Hilda, I should like very much to dance—if only I could.

HILDA.

Oh I see; you have never learned.

LYNGSTRAND.

No, I haven't. But that was not what I meant. I meant that I can't dance on account of my chest.

HILDA.

On account of that "lesion" you spoke of?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, that's it.

HILDA.

Does this "lesion" make you very unhappy?

LYNGSTRAND.

Oh no, I can't say it does. [*Smiling.*] For I believe it is that which makes everybody so kind and friendly and helpful to me.

HILDA.

Yes; and of course it's not a bit serious.

LYNGSTRAND.

No, not serious in the least. I could see quite well that your father thought so too.

HILDA.

And it will pass off as soon as you go abroad?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes; it will pass off.

BOLETTA.

[*With flowers in her hand.*] Look at these, Mr. Lyngstrand—here is one for your button-hole.

LYNGSTRAND.

Oh, a thousand thanks, Miss Wangel! You are really too kind.

HILDA.

[*Looking down the hill to the right.*] Here they are, coming up the path.

BOLETTA.

[*Also looking down.*] I hope they know where to turn off. No, they are going the wrong way.

LYNGSTRAND.

[*Rises.*] I'll run down to the turning and call out to them.

HILDA.

You'll have to call very loud then.

BOLETTA.

No, you had better not. You'll only tire yourself again.

LYNGSTRAND.

Oh, it's so easy going downhill.

[*He goes out to the right.*

HILDA.

Yes, downhill. [*Looks after him.*] Now he's jumping too! And it never occurs to him that he will have to come up again.

BOLETTA.

Poor creature——!

HILDA.

If Lyngstrand were to propose to you, would you have him?

BOLETTA.

Are you out of your senses?

HILDA.

Oh I mean, of course, if he hadn't this "lesion"—and if he weren't going to die so soon. Would you have him t h e n?

BOLETTA.

I think y o u had better have him.

HILDA.

No, I'm bothered if I would. He hasn't a rap. He hasn't enough to live upon himself.

BOLETTA.

Why are you always so much taken up with him then?

HILDA.

Oh, that's only on account of his "lesion."

BOLETTA.

I have never noticed that you pity him a bit.

HILDA.

No more I do. But it's so tempting to me——

BOLETTA.

What is?

HILDA.

To look at him, and get him to say that it's not serious, and that he's going abroad and going to be an artist. He's perfectly convinced of all that, and as happy as possible about it. And to know that nothing will come of it after all; nothing whatever; that he won't live long enough—— I find that so thrilling to think of.

BOLETTA.

Thrilling!

HILDA.

Yes. I find it thrilling—I take that liberty.

BOLETTA.

Fie Hilda, you are really a horrid child!

HILDA.

Well, that's what I want to be—just for spite! [*Looks down.*] Ah, at last! Arnholm doesn't seem to enjoy climbing. [*Turns round.*] Oh, by-the-bye—what do you think I noticed about Arnholm while we were at dinner?

BOLETTA.

What?

HILDA.

Only think, he's beginning to turn bald—right on the crown of his head.

BOLETTA.

Oh rubbish! I'm sure he isn't.

HILDA.

Yes he is. And he has wrinkles here, round both his eyes. Good heavens, Boletta, how could you be so gone on him when he was your tutor?

BOLETTA.

[*Smiling.*] Yes, can you understand it? I remember once shedding bitter tears because he said he thought Boletta an ugly name.

HILDA.

Think of that! [*Looks down again.*] I say! Look there! Just look!—There's "the lady from the sea" walking with him—not with father—and jabbering away to him. I wonder whether those two aren't a bit sweet on each other.

BOLETTA.

You ought really to be ashamed of yourself. How dare you say such things about her? We were beginning to get on so well together——

HILDA.

Oh, indeed!—Don't you believe it, my girl! I tell you we shall never get on well with her. She doesn't suit us, nor we her. Heaven knows what tempted father to drag her into the house!—I shouldn't wonder a bit if she were to go mad on our hands some fine day.

BOLETTA.

Mad? What makes you think such a thing?

HILDA.

Oh, there would be nothing so wonderful about it. Didn't her mother go mad? She died mad, I know.

BOLETTA.

Yes, I should like to know what you don't poke your nose into. All I say is, don't go chattering about it. Be good now—for father's sake. Do you hear, Hilda?

[WANGEL, ELLIDA, ARNHOLM, *and* LYNGSTRAND *come up from the right.*

ELLIDA.

[*Points away towards the background.*] It lies out there.

ARNHOLM.

Yes, of course; it must be in that direction.

ELLIDA.

Out there lies the sea.

BOLETTA.

[*To* ARNHOLM.] Don't you think it's pretty up here?

ARNHOLM.

I should rather say grand—a glorious view!

WANGEL.

I daresay you have never been up here before?

ARNHOLM.

No, never. In my time I doubt if it was accessible. There wasn't even a footpath.

WANGEL.

And no grounds laid out either. We have done all that in the last few years.

BOLETTA.

Over there, on the Pilot's Knoll, the view is even finer.

WANGEL.

Shall we go there, Ellida?

ELLIDA.

[*Seats herself upon a stone to the right.*] Thank you, I won't go. But you others ought to. I shall stay here in the meantime.

WANGEL.

Very well; then I'll stay with you. The girls can do the honours for Arnholm.

BOLETTA.

Do you care to come with us, Mr. Arnholm?

ARNHOLM.

Yes, I should like to. Is there a path up there too?

BOLETTA.

Oh yes; a good broad path.

HILDA.

There's plenty of room for two people to go arm-in-arm.

ARNHOLM.

[*Jestingly.*] I wonder if there is, little Miss Hilda? [*To* BOLETTA.] Shall we two try if she is right?

BOLETTA.

[*Repressing a smile.*] Yes, if you like. Let us.

[*They go out to the left, arm-in-arm.*

HILDA.

[*To* LYNGSTRAND.] Shall we go too——?

LYNGSTRAND.

Arm-in-arm——?

HILDA.

Why not? I don't mind.

LYNGSTRAND.

[*Gives her his arm, and laughs with pleasure.*] This is great fun, isn't it?

HILDA.

Great fun——?

LYNGSTRAND.

Why, it looks exactly as if we were engaged.

HILDA.

I suppose you have never given a lady your arm before, Mr. Lyngstrand. [*They go out to the left.*

WANGEL.

[*Who is standing at the back, beside the landmark.*] Dear Ellida, now we have a little time to ourselves——

ELLIDA.

Yes, come and sit here beside me.

WANGEL.

[*Seats himself.*] It's so open and peaceful here. Now let us have a little talk.

ELLIDA.

What about?

WANGEL.

About you; and about our relation to each other, Ellida. I see well enough that this state of things cannot continue.

ELLIDA.

What would you have in its place?

WANGEL.

Full confidence, dear. A life in common—such as we used to live.

ELLIDA.

Oh, if that could only be! But it's so utterly impossible!

WANGEL.

I think I understand you. From certain things you have let fall now and then, I believe I do.

ELLIDA.

[*Vehemently.*] No you don't! Don't say that you understand——!

WANGEL.

Oh yes. Yours is an upright nature, Ellida. You have a loyal heart.

ELLIDA.

Yes, I have.

WANGEL.

Any relation in which you can feel secure and happy must be a full and perfect one.

ELLIDA.

[*Looking anxiously at him.*] Well,—and then?

WANGEL.

You are not fitted to be a man's second wife.

ELLIDA.

What makes you think of t h a t now?

WANGEL.

The suspicion has often crossed my mind; but to-day I saw it clearly. The children's little commemoration—you looked on me as a sort of accomplice.—Well yes; a man's memories are not to be wiped out—not mine, at all events. It is not in my nature.

ELLIDA.

I know that. Oh, I know it so well.

WANGEL.

But you are mistaken, none the less. It seems to you almost as though the children's mother were still alive. You feel her invisible presence in our midst. You think that my heart is equally divided between you and her. It is this idea that revolts you. You see, as it were, something immoral in our relation; and that is why you cannot, or will not, live with me any more as my wife.

ELLIDA.

[*Rises.*] Have you seen all this, Wangel? Seen through all this?

WANGEL.

Yes, to-day I have at last seen through it—into the very depths.

ELLIDA.

Into the very depths, you say. Oh, you mustn't think that.

WANGEL.

[*Rises.*] I know very well that there is more than this, dear Ellida.

ELLIDA.

[*Apprehensively.*] You know that there is more?

WANGEL.

Yes. There is this: that you cannot endure your surroundings here. The mountains oppress you and weigh upon your spirits. There is not light enough for you here—the horizon is not wide enough—the air not strong and stimulating enough for you.

ELLIDA.

There you are quite right. Night and day, winter and summer, it is upon me—this haunting home-sickness for the sea.

WANGEL.

I know it well, dear Ellida. [*Lays his hand upon her head.*] And therefore the poor sick child must go to its own home again.

ELLIDA.

How do you mean?

WANGEL.

Quite literally. We will move.

ELLIDA.

Move!

WANGEL.

Yes. Out somewhere by the open sea,—to some place where you may find a real home, after your own heart.

ELLIDA.

Oh, my dear, you mustn't think of that! It's quite impossible. You could never live happily anywhere in the world but here.

WANGEL.

That must be as it may. And besides—do you think I can live happily here—without you?

ELLIDA.

But here I am; and here I will remain. Am I not yours?

WANGEL.

A r e you mine, Ellida?

ELLIDA.

Oh, please say no more of that scheme. Here you have all that is life and breath to you. Your whole life-work lies here, and here only.

WANGEL.

That must be as it may, I say. We will move from here—move seaward somewhere. My mind is made up beyond recall, dear Ellida.

ELLIDA.

Oh, but what do you suppose we shall gain by t h a t?

WANGEL.

You will regain your health and peace of mind.

ELLIDA.

I doubt it. But you yourself! Think of yourself too. What would y o u gain?

WANGEL.

I should regain you, my dearest.

ELLIDA.

But that you cannot do! No, no, you cannot, Wangel! That is just the terrible, the heart-breaking part of it.

WANGEL.

That remains to be seen. If you are haunted by such thoughts here, then assuredly there is nothing for it but to get you away from here. And the sooner the better. My mind is made up beyond recall, I tell you.

ELLIDA.

No! Rather than that,—Heaven help me—I will tell you everything without reserve, exactly as it is.

WANGEL.

Yes, yes—do!

ELLIDA.

You shall not make yourself unhappy for my sake; especially as it would do us no good, after all.

WANGEL.

You have promised to tell me everything—exactly as it stands.

ELLIDA.

I will tell you as well as I can,—and as far as I understand things.—Come here and sit by me.

[*They seat themselves upon the stones.*

WANGEL.

Well, Ellida? Well——?

ELLIDA.

That day when you came out there and asked me if I could and would be yours—you spoke to me frankly

and openly about your first marriage. You said it had been very happy.

WANGEL.

And so it was.

ELLIDA.

Yes, yes; I do not doubt it, dear. That is not why I speak of it now. I only want to remind you that I, on my side, was frank with you. I told you quite openly that I had once in my life cared for some one else. That it had come to—a sort of betrothal between us.

WANGEL.

A sort of——?

ELLIDA.

Yes, something of the kind. Well, it lasted only a very short time. He went away; and afterwards I broke it off. All this I told you.

WANGEL.

But, dear Ellida, why go back upon all this? After all, it did not really concern me. I have never even asked you who he was.

ELLIDA.

No, you have not. You are always so considerate to me.

WANGEL.

[*Smiling.*] Well, in this case,—I scarcely needed to be told his name.

ELLIDA.

His name?

WANGEL.

Out at Skioldvik and in those parts there were not many to choose from. Or rather, there was only one man——

ELLIDA.

I suppose you think it was—Arnholm.

WANGEL.

Yes—was it not?

ELLIDA.

No.

WANGEL.

It was not? Well then I am certainly at a loss.

ELLIDA.

Do you remember that, in the late autumn one year, a large American ship came into Skioldvik for repairs?

WANGEL.

Yes, I remember it well. It was on board her that the captain was found murdered in his cabin one morning. I remember going to make the post-mortem.

ELLIDA.

Yes, you did.

WANGEL.

It was said to be the second mate who had killed him.

ELLIDA.

No one can tell that! It was never proved.

WANGEL.

No; but I think there is no doubt about it. Else why should he have gone and drowned himself?

ELLIDA.

He did not drown himself. He escaped in a vessel bound for the north.

WANGEL.

[*Starts.*] How do you know that?

ELLIDA.

[*With an effort.*] Because, Wangel—because it was that second mate to whom I—was betrothed.

WANGEL.

[*Starting up.*] What do you say? Can this be possible?

ELLIDA.

Yes,—he was the man.

WANGEL.

But how in the world, Ellida——? How could you do such a thing! Go and engage yourself to such a man as that! A man you knew nothing on earth about!—What was his name?

ELLIDA.

He called himself Friman[1] then. Afterwards, in his letters, he signed himself Alfred Johnston.

[1] Pronounce *Freeman.*

WANGEL.

And where did he come from?

ELLIDA.

From Finmark, he said. He was born over in Finland though. He had come across the frontier as a child,—with his father I think.

WANGEL.

He was a Quæn, then.

ELLIDA.

Yes, I believe they are called so.

WANGEL.

What more do you know of him?

ELLIDA.

Only that he went to sea very young, and that he had made long voyages.

WANGEL.

Nothing else?

ELLIDA.

No; we never talked about such things.

WANGEL.

What did you talk about then?

ELLIDA.

Mainly about the sea.

WANGEL.

Ah——! About the sea?

ELLIDA.

About storm and calm. About dark nights at sea. About the sea in the glittering sunshine, too. But we talked most about the whales, and the porpoises, and the seals that lie out upon the reefs and bask in the midday sun. And then we spoke of the gulls and the eagles, and all the other sea-birds, you know. And—is it not strange?—when we talked of such things, it seemed to me as though both the sea-animals and the sea-birds were akin to him.

WANGEL.

And you yourself——?

ELLIDA.

Yes, I almost thought that I, too, was akin to all of them.

WANGEL.

Yes, yes.—And that was how you came to betroth yourself to him?

ELLIDA.

Yes; he said I was to do it.

WANGEL.

Was to? Had you no will of your own?

ELLIDA.

Not when he was near. Oh—afterwards it all seemed so utterly inexplicable to me.

WANGEL.

Did you see him often?

ELLIDA.

No, not very often. He went over the lighthouse one day; that is how I came to know him. And afterwards we used to meet occasionally. But then came this affair about the captain; and he had to go away.

WANGEL.

Oh yes, let me hear about that!

ELLIDA

It was in the dusk of the early morning that I got a line from him. It said that I must come out to him at Bratthammer[1]—you know, the headland between the lighthouse and Skioldvik.

WANGEL.

Yes, yes—I know it well.

ELLIDA.

I must come there immediately, the note said for he wanted to speak to me.

WANGEL.

And you went?

ELLIDA.

Yes. I could not help it. Well—he told me that he had stabbed the captain in the night.

[1] Pronounce *Bratt-hammer*.

WANGEL.

He told you himself! Said it straight out!

ELLIDA.

Yes. But he had only done what was right and just, he said.

WANGEL.

Right and just? What reason did he give, then, for stabbing him?

ELLIDA.

He would not tell me the reason. He said it was not a thing for me to hear about.

WANGEL.

And you believed him, on his bare word?

ELLIDA.

Yes, I never thought of doubting him. Well, at all events he had to go away. But when he was on the point of saying good-bye to me—— No, you could never imagine what he did.

WANGEL.

Well, tell me then.

ELLIDA.

He took a key-ring out of his pocket, and drew off his finger a ring he used to wear. Then he took from me a little ring that I had, and these two he slipped together on the key-ring. And then he said that now we two should together be wedded to the sea.

WANGEL.

Wedded——?

ELLIDA.

Yes, so he said. And then he flung the large ring and the two small ones as far as ever he could into the deep water.

WANGEL.

And you, Ellida? Did you agree to that?

ELLIDA.

Yes, would you believe it, I thought at the time that it was all as it should be.—But, thank heaven, then he went away!

WANGEL.

And when once he was away?

ELLIDA.

Oh, you may be sure I soon came to my senses again. I saw how utterly stupid and meaningless the whole thing had been.

WANGEL.

But you said something about letters. Did you hear from him afterwards?

ELLIDA.

Yes, I heard from him. First, I got a line or two from Archangel. He said nothing but that he was going over to America; and he told me where to address an answer.

WANGEL.

Did you write?

ELLIDA.

Immediately. I said, of course, that all must be over between us—that he must never think of me again, as I meant never to think any more of him.

WANGEL.

And did he write again, in spite of that?

ELLIDA.

Yes, he wrote again.

WANGEL.

And what was his answer to what you had said?

ELLIDA.

Not a word. He wrote just as if I had never broken with him. He told me quite calmly that I must wait for him. When he was ready for me he would let me know, and then I was to come to him at once.

WANGEL.

Then he would not release you?

ELLIDA.

No. So I wrote again, almost word for word the same as before: only more strongly.

WANGEL.

And did he give way then?

ELLIDA.

Oh no, far from it. He wrote as calmly as before. Never a word about my having broken with him. Then I saw it was useless, so I wrote to him no more.

WANGEL.

And did not hear from him either?

ELLIDA.

Yes, I have had three letters from him since. Once he wrote from California and once from China. The last letter I got from him was from Australia. He said he was going to the gold-mines; and since then I have heard nothing from him.

WANGEL.

That man must have had an extraordinary power over you, Ellida.

ELLIDA.

Oh yes, yes. That terrible man!

WANGEL.

But you must not think any more about it. Never! Promise me that, my dear, my precious Ellida! We will try another cure for you now—a fresher air than this of the inner fiord. The salt-laden, sweeping sea-breezes, dear! What do you say to that?

ELLIDA.

Oh, don't speak of it! Don't think of such a thing! There is no help for me in that! I know, I feel, that I should not be able to throw it off out there either.

WANGEL.

To throw what off, dear? What do you mean?

ELLIDA.

I mean the terror of him. His unfathomable power over my soul——

WANGEL.

But you h a v e thrown it off! Long ago; when you broke with him. It is all over, long ago.

ELLIDA.

[*Springs up.*] No, that is just what it is not!

WANGEL.

Not over!

ELLIDA.

No, Wangel—it is not over! And I am afraid it never will be over. Never in this life.

WANGEL.

[*In a choked voice.*] Do you mean to say that you have never in your heart of hearts been able to forget that strange man?

ELLIDA.

I had forgotten him. But then, all at once, he seemed to come again.

WANGEL.

How long ago is that?

ELLIDA.

It is about three years ago now, or a little more. It was whilst—before the child was born.

WANGEL.

Ah! It was then, was it? In that case, Ellida—I begin to understand much more clearly.

ELLIDA.

You are wrong, dear! This thing that has come over me—oh, I don't think it can ever be understood.

WANGEL.

[*Looks at her, pained.*] To think that for all these three years your heart has been given to another man. To another! Not to me,—but to another!

ELLIDA.

Oh, you utterly misunderstand me. I love no one but you.

WANGEL.

[*In a low tone.*] How is it, then, that for all that time you have refused to live with me as my wife?

ELLIDA.

That is because of the dread the strange man has cast over me.

WANGEL.

Dread——?

ELLIDA.

Yes, dread. Such a dread, such a terror, as can arise only from the sea. For now I must tell you, Wangel——

[*The young townspeople come back from the left, bow, and go out to the right. With them come* ARNHOLM, BOLETTA, HILDA, *and* LYNGSTRAND.

BOLETTA.

[*As they pass by.*] What! Still up here?

ELLIDA.

Yes, it's so delightfully cool up here on the heights.

ARNHOLM.

For our part, we are going down to have a dance.

WANGEL.

Very well. We will come too, in a little while.

HILDA.

Good-bye for the present then.

ELLIDA.

Mr. Lyngstrand—will you please wait a moment?

[LYNGSTRAND *stops.* ARNHOLM, BOLETTA, *and* HILDA *go out to the right.*

ELLIDA.

[*To* LYNGSTRAND.] Are you going to dance too?

LYNGSTRAND.

No, Mrs. Wangel, I'm afraid I must not.

ELLIDA.

No, you ought to be careful. That weakness in your chest—you have not quite got over it yet.

LYNGSTRAND.

No, not thoroughly.

ELLIDA.

[*Somewhat hesitatingly.*] How long is it now since you made that voyage——?

LYNGSTRAND.

When I got the lesion?

ELLIDA.

Yes, that voyage you were telling us about this morning.

LYNGSTRAND.

Oh well, it must be about—wait a bit—yes, it was just three years ago.

ELLIDA.

Three years?

LYNGSTRAND.

Or a little more. We left America in February, and we were wrecked in March. We got into the equinoctial gales.

ELLIDA.

[*Looking at* WANGEL.] You see that was the time——

WANGEL.

But, my dear Ellida——?

ELLIDA.

Well, don't let us detain you, Mr. Lyngstrand. Go; but don't dance.

LYNGSTRAND.

No, I shall only look on. [*He goes out to the right.*

WANGEL.

Dear Ellida—why did you cross-question him about that voyage?

ELLIDA.

Johnston was in the same ship. Of that I am perfectly certain.

WANGEL.

What makes you think so?

ELLIDA.

[*Without answering.*] He came to know, during the voyage, that I had married some one else, while he was away. And then—at the very same moment, this came upon me!

WANGEL.

This dread?

ELLIDA.

Yes. Sometimes, without the smallest warning, I suddenly see him stand bodily before me. Or rather a little to one side. He never looks at me; he is only there.

WANGEL.

How does he appear to you?

ELLIDA.

Just as I saw him last.

WANGEL.

Ten years ago?

ELLIDA.

Yes. Out at Bratthammer. I see his scarf-pin most distinctly of all, with a large, bluish-white pearl in it. That pearl is like a dead fish's eye. And it seems to glare at me.

WANGEL.

Good God——! You are more ill than I thought; more ill than you know yourself, Ellida.

ELLIDA.

Yes, yes,—help me if you can! For I feel it closing round me more and more.

WANGEL.

And you have been in this state for three whole years. You have suffered this secret anguish without confiding in me!

ELLIDA.

Oh I could not! Not till now, when it became necessary for your own sake. If I had told you all this—then I must also have told you—the unspeakable.

WANGEL.

The unspeakable——?

ELLIDA.

[*Evasively.*] No, no, no! Do not ask! Only one thing more, and I have done.—Wangel—how shall we fathom the mystery—of the child's eyes——?

WANGEL.

My own dear Ellida, I assure you it was pure imagination on your part. The child had exactly the same eyes as other normal children.

ELLIDA.

No, it had not! How could you help seeing it? The child's eyes changed colour with the sea. If the fiord lay in a sunny calm, the eyes were calm and sunny. And the same way in storms.—Oh, I saw it well enough, if you did not.

WANGEL.

[*Humouring her.*] H'm,—perhaps so. But even if it were? What then?

ELLIDA.

[*Softly, and drawing nearer to him.*] I have seen eyes like that before.

WANGEL.

When? And where——?

ELLIDA.

Out at Bratthammer. Ten years ago.

WANGEL.

[*Recoils a step.*] What do you——

ELLIDA.

[*Whispers, trembling.*] The child had the strange man's eyes.

WANGEL.

[*Cries out involuntarily.*] Ellida——

ELLIDA.

[*Clasps her hands over her head in despair.*] Now you can surely understand why I never w i l l,—never d a r e live with you as your wife!

[*She turns hastily and rushes down the hill to the right.*

WANGEL.

[*Hastens after her and calls.*] Ellida! Ellida! My poor unhappy Ellida!

ACT THIRD

A remote corner of Dr. Wangel's *garden. The place is damp, marshy, and overshadowed by large old trees. To the right is seen the edge of a stagnant pond. A low open fence divides the garden from the footpath and fiord in the background. In the farthest distance, beyond the fiord, mountain ranges rise into peaks. It is late afternoon, almost evening.*

Boletta *sits sewing upon a stone seat to the left. On the seat lie a couple of books and a work-basket.* Hilda *and* Lyngstrand, *both with fishing-tackle, stand by the edge of the pond.*

Hilda.

[*Makes a sign to* Lyngstrand.] Stand still. I see a big one there.

Lyngstrand.

[*Looking.*] Where is it?

Hilda.

[*Points.*] Can't you see—down there. And look! I declare there's another! [*Looks away through the trees.*] Ugh—there he comes to frighten them away!

Boletta.

[*Looks up.*] Who is coming?

HILDA.

Your tutor, miss!

BOLETTA.

My——?

HILDA.

Yes; thank goodness he was never mine!

ARNHOLM *comes forward among the trees on the right.*

ARNHOLM.

Are there fish in the pond now?

HILDA.

Yes, there are some very old carp.

ARNHOLM.

Ah, so the old carp are still alive?

HILDA.

Yes; they're tough, I can tell you. But now we're going to put an end to some of them.

ARNHOLM.

You ought rather to try the fiord.

LYNGSTRAND.

No, the pond—the pond is more mysterious, as you might call it.

HILDA.

Yes, it's more thrilling here.—Have you just been having a bathe?

ARNHOLM.

Precisely. I've come straight from the bathing-house.

HILDA.

I suppose you kept within the enclosure?

ARNHOLM.

Yes, I'm no great swimmer.

HILDA.

Can you swim on your back?

ARNHOLM.

No.

HILDA.

I can. [*To* LYNGSTRAND.] Let us try over there on the other side. [*They skirt the pond, out to the right.*

ARNHOLM.

[*Advances to* BOLETTA.] You are all alone, Boletta?

BOLETTA.

Oh yes, I generally am.

ARNHOLM.

Is not your mother in the garden?

BOLETTA.

No; I think she is out walking with father.

ARNHOLM.

How is she this afternoon?

BOLETTA.

I don't quite know. I forgot to ask.

ARNHOLM.

What are the books you have there?

BOLETTA.

Oh, one is a botanical book, and the other a descriptive geography.

ARNHOLM.

Are you fond of that kind of reading?

BOLETTA.

Yes, when I can find time for it—— But of course the housekeeping must come first.

ARNHOLM.

But does not your mother—your stepmother—help you with that?

BOLETTA.

No, it is my work. I had to look after it during the two years father was alone; and so it has continued ever since.

ARNHOLM.

But you are as fond as ever of reading?

BOLETTA.

Yes, I read all the useful books I can get hold of. One wants to know a little about the world. Here we live so entirely outside of everything,—or almost entirely.

ARNHOLM.

No, my dear Boletta, don't say that.

BOLETTA.

But I do say so. I don't see much difference between our life and the life of the carp in the pond there. They have the fiord close beside them, where the great free shoals of fish sweep out and in. But the poor tame house-fishes know nothing of all that; and they can never join in.

ARNHOLM.

I don't think it would agree with them at all if they did get out into the fiord.

BOLETTA.

Oh, they might take their chance of t h a t, I should think.

ARNHOLM.

Besides, you can't say that you are so utterly out of the world here. Not in summer, at all events. This place is a sort of local centre, nowadays, in the life of the world—a point of convergence for many passing streams.

BOLETTA.

[*Smiling.*] Oh, you are in the passing stream yourself; it is easy for you to make game of us.

ARNHOLM.

I make game——? What puts that into your head?

BOLETTA.

Why, all this about a centre, and a point of convergence for the life of the world, is simply what you have heard people say in the town. They are always talking like that.

ARNHOLM.

Yes, frankly, I have noticed as much.

BOLETTA.

But there's really not a word of truth in it, you know—not for us who live here constantly. What is it to us that the great outside world passes our doors on its way to the midnight sun? We cannot join in the stream. There is no midnight sun for u s. Oh no; we must be content to linger our lives out, here in our carp-pond.

ARNHOLM.

[*Seats himself beside her.*] Tell me now, dear Boletta—I wonder if there is not something or other,—some particular thing I mean—that you are all the time longing for, here at home?

BOLETTA.

Well, perhaps there may be.

ARNHOLM.

Then what is it? What are you longing for?

BOLETTA.

Chiefly to get away.

ARNHOLM.

That before everything?

BOLETTA.

Yes. And next to learn a little more; to gain some real insight into things in general.

ARNHOLM.

When I used to read with you, your father often said that he would let you go to college.

BOLETTA.

Oh yes, poor father,—he says so many things. But when it comes to the point, then—— There is no real energy in father.

ARNHOLM.

No, unfortunately—I suppose there is not. But have you ever talked to him about this? Put serious pressure on him, I mean?

BOLETTA.

No, I can't say that I have.

ARNHOLM.

Well now really, Boletta, you ought to do so, before it is too late. Why don't you?

BOLETTA.

Oh, because there is no real energy in me either, I suppose. I probably take after father in that.

ARNHOLM.

H'm—I wonder whether you don't do yourself injustice there?

BOLETTA.

Oh no, I'm sorry to say. And then father has so little time to think about me and my future—and not much inclination either. He puts things of that sort aside as much as he can; he is so entirely taken up with Ellida——

ARNHOLM.

With whom——? How——?

BOLETTA.

I mean that he and my stepmother—— [*Breaking off.*] Father and mother lead a life of their own, you see.

ARNHOLM.

Well, so much the more reason for you to see about getting away.

BOLETTA.

Yes, but at the same time I don't feel as if I had the right to go away—to leave father.

ARNHOLM.

But, my dear Boletta, you will have to leave him some time, in any case; and since that is so, why delay——?

BOLETTA.

Yes, I suppose there is nothing else for it. Of course I ought to think of myself too, and try to find a position of some sort. When once father is gone I shall have no one to depend on.—But poor father,—I dread the thought of leaving him.

ARNHOLM.

Dread——?

BOLETTA.

Yes, for his own sake.

ARNHOLM.

But, bless me, what about your stepmother? She will still be with him.

BOLETTA.

Yes, that's true. But she is not at all fitted for all that mother knew so well how to do. There are so many things she doesn't see—or perhaps w i l l not see—or trouble herself about. I don't know which way to put it.

ARNHOLM.

H'm—I think I understand what you mean?

BOLETTA.

Poor father,—he is weak in certain ways. I daresay you have noticed that yourself. You see he hasn't enough work to fill up his whole time; and then she is quite incapable of being any support to him.—That is partly his own fault, however.

ARNHOLM.

How so?

BOLETTA.

Oh, father always likes to see cheerful faces around him; there must be sunshine and contentment in the house, he says. So I am afraid he often lets her have medicine that does her no good in the long run.

ARNHOLM.

Do you really think so?

BOLETTA.

Yes, I can't get rid of the idea. She is so strange at times. [*Vehemently.*] But it does seem hard, does it not, that I should have to stay on at home here? It does not in reality help father at all; and I can't but feel that I have duties towards myself too.

ARNHOLM.

I'll tell you what, my dear Boletta,—we must talk all this over more thoroughly.

BOLETTA.

Oh, that won't help much; I daresay I was created to pass my life here in the carp-pond.

ARNHOLM.

Not at all. It depends entirely upon yourself.

BOLETTA.

[*Eagerly.*] Do you think so?

ARNHOLM.

Yes, believe me; it lies wholly and solely in your own hands.

BOLETTA.

Oh, if it only did——! Do you mean that you will put in a good word for me with father?

ARNHOLM.

I will do that too. But first of all I want to speak frankly and without reserve to you yourself, my dear Boletta. [*Looks out to the left.*] Hush! Let no one notice anything; we'll finish our talk by-and-by.

ELLIDA *enters from the left. She wears no hat, but has a light shawl thrown over her head and shoulders.*

ELLIDA.

[*With nervous animation.*] How nice it is here! How delightful!

ARNHOLM.

[*Rising.*] Have you been out walking?

ELLIDA.

Yes, a long, long splendid walk with Wangel. And now we are going out for a sail.

BOLETTA.

Won't you sit down?

ELLIDA.

No thank you; I couldn't sit.

BOLETTA.

[*Moving along the bench.*] There's plenty of room.

ELLIDA.

[*Walking about.*] No no no, I couldn't sit; I couldn't sit.

ARNHOLM.

Your walk has surely done you good; it seems to have exhilarated you.

ELLIDA.

Oh, I feel so thoroughly well. I feel so unspeakably happy! So safe! So safe—— [*Looks out to the left.*] What large steamer is that coming in?

BOLETTA.

[*Rises and looks out.*] It must be the big English boat.

ARNHOLM.

They are mooring her to the buoy. Does she generally stop here?

BOLETTA.

Only for half an hour; she goes farther up the fiord.

ELLIDA.

And then outward again—to-morrow; out on the great open sea; right over the sea. Think of going with her! If one only could! If one only could!

ARNHOLM.

Have you never taken a long sea-voyage, Mrs. Wangel?

ELLIDA.

Never in my life; only little trips in the fiords.

BOLETTA.

[*With a sigh.*] Oh no, we have to put up with the dry land.

ARNHOLM.

Well, at any rate, that is our natural element.

ELLIDA.

No, I don't think so at all.

ARNHOLM.

Not dry land?

ELLIDA.

No, I don't believe it. I believe that if men had only accustomed themselves from the first to live their life on the sea—or even in the sea—we should by this time have been far more perfect than we are;—both better and happier.

ARNHOLM.

Do you really believe that?

ELLIDA.

Well, at any rate, it is a theory of mine. I have often talked of it with Wangel.

ARNHOLM.

Indeed! And he——?

ELLIDA.

Oh, he thinks there may be something in it.

ARNHOLM.

[*Joking.*] Well, who knows? But what's done is done. We have once for all taken the wrong turning and become land animals instead of sea animals. All things considered, I'm afraid it is too late now to rectify the error.

ELLIDA.

Yes, that is the mournful truth. And I believe people have an instinctive feeling of it themselves—it haunts them like a secret sorrow and regret. Believe me, this lies at the very root of the melancholy of mankind. I am sure it does.

ARNHOLM.

But my dear Mrs. Wangel,—I have never noticed that people a r e so profoundly melancholy. I should say, on the contrary, that most people take life cheerfully and lightly—with a great, calm, unconscious joy.

ELLIDA.

Oh no, that is not so. That joy—it is just like our joy in the long, light summer days. It has in it the foreboding of the darkness to come. And this foreboding casts its shadow over the joy of mankind,—just as the driving scud casts its shadow over the fiord. There it lies all blue and shining; and then all of a sudden——

BOLETTA.

You shouldn't let yourself dwell on such sad thoughts. You were so bright and cheerful a moment ago——

ELLIDA.

Yes yes, so I was. All this is—it's so stupid of me. [*Looks uneasily around.*] If only Wangel would come down here. He promised me so faithfully; and yet he doesn't come. He must have forgotten. Dear Mr. Arnholm, won't you go and find him for me?

ARNHOLM.

Yes, with pleasure.

ELLIDA.

Tell him that he really must come at once; for now I cannot see him——

ARNHOLM.

Not see him——?

ELLIDA.

Oh, you don't understand me. When he is not present, I often can't remember what he looks like; and then it seems as though I had lost him utterly.—It's so terribly painful. Do go!

[*She wanders over in the direction of the pond.*

BOLETTA.

[*To* ARNHOLM.] I will go with you; you don't know——

ARNHOLM.

Oh don't trouble; I shall manage——

BOLETTA.

[*In an undertone.*] No no, I am uneasy. I'm afraid he is on board the steamer.

ARNHOLM.

Afraid?

BOLETTA.

Yes, he generally goes to see if there is any one he knows among the passengers; and there's a refreshment bar on board——

ARNHOLM.

Ah! Come along then.

[*He and* BOLETTA *go out to the left.*

[ELLIDA *stands awhile gazing into the pond. From time to time she talks softly and in broken phrases to herself.*

Outside on the footpath, beyond the garden fence, a STRANGER *in travelling dress enters from the left. He has bushy, reddish hair and beard, wears a Scotch cap, and has a travelling-wallet slung across his shoulder by a strap.*

THE STRANGER.

[*Walks slowly along by the fence, and looks into the garden. When he sees* ELLIDA *he stops, looks intently and searchingly at her, and says softly:*] Good evening, Ellida!

ELLIDA.

[*Turns round and cries out.*] Oh my dear—have you come at last!

THE STRANGER.

Yes, at last.

ELLIDA.

[*Looks at him, astonished and apprehensive.*] Who are you? Are you looking for some one here?

THE STRANGER.

You know I am.

ELLIDA.

[*Taken aback.*] What is this? How strangely you speak to me![1] Who is it you are looking for?

THE STRANGER.

You know I am looking for you.

ELLIDA.

[*Starts.*] Ah——! [*Gazes at him a moment, staggers backwards, and breaks out into a half-smothered shriek.*] The eyes!—The eyes!

THE STRANGER.

Well,—are you beginning to recognise me at last? I knew you at once, Ellida.

ELLIDA.

The eyes. Don't look at me like that. I will call for help.

[1] He has addressed her, as he does throughout, by the familiar *du*— "thou." She always uses the formal *De* in speaking to him.

THE STRANGER.

Hush, hush! Don't be afraid. I will do you no harm.

ELLIDA.

[*Holds her hands over her eyes.*] Don't look at me like that, I say!

THE STRANGER.

[*Leans his arms upon the garden fence.*] I came with the English steamer.

ELLIDA.

[*Glances shrinkingly at him.*] What do you want with me?

THE STRANGER.

I promised I would come again, as soon as I could——

ELLIDA.

Go! Go away again! Never—never come here any more! I wrote to you that everything must be at end between us! Everything! You know I did!

THE STRANGER.

[*Unmoved, without answering.*] I wanted to come to you sooner, but I could not. At last I saw my way; and here I am, Ellida.

ELLIDA.

What do you want with me? What are you thinking of? What have you come here for?

THE STRANGER.

You know quite well that I have come to take you away.

ELLIDA.

[*Shrinking back in terror.*] To take me away! Is t h a t what you intend?

THE STRANGER.

Yes, of course.

ELLIDA.

But surely you know that I am married!

THE STRANGER.

Yes, I know it.

ELLIDA.

And yet——! In spite of that, you have come to—to—take me away!

THE STRANGER.

Yes, you see I have.

ELLIDA.

[*Presses both her hands to her head.*] Oh this fearful——! Oh this terror, this terror——!

THE STRANGER.

Perhaps you do not wish to come!

ELLIDA.

[*Beside herself.*] Don't look at me like that!

THE STRANGER.

Do you not wish to come, I ask?

ELLIDA.

No, no, no! I will not! Never to the end of time. I will not, I say! I neither can, nor will! [*Lower.*] I dare not, either.

THE STRANGER.

[*Climbs over the fence and comes into the garden.*] Very well then, Ellida—let me just say one single thing before I go.

ELLIDA.

[*Tries to escape, but cannot. She stands as if paralysed with fear, and supports herself against a tree-trunk near the pond.*] Do not touch me! Do not come near me! Stay where you are! Do not touch me, I say!

THE STRANGER.

[*Cautiously, coming a step or two towards her.*] You must not be so afraid of me, Ellida.

ELLIDA.

[*Puts her hands before her eyes.*] Do not look at me like that!

THE STRANGER.

Don't be afraid, don't be afraid.

DOCTOR WANGEL *comes through the garden from the left.*

WANGEL.

[*Before he has quite emerged from among the trees.*] Well, I've kept you waiting a nice time.

ELLIDA.

[*Rushes to him, clings fast to his arm and cries.*] Oh Wangel,—save me! Save me—if you can!

WANGEL.

Ellida,—what in heaven's name——!

ELLIDA.

Save me, Wangel! Don't you see him? There he stands!

WANGEL.

[*Looks at the* STRANGER.] That man there? [*Goes towards him.*] Who are y o u, may I ask? And why have you come into this garden?

THE STRANGER.

[*Indicates* ELLIDA *by a nod.*] I want to speak to h e r.

WANGEL.

Indeed. Then I suppose it was you——? [*To* ELLIDA.] I hear a stranger called at the house and asked for you.

THE STRANGER.

Yes, it was I.

WANGEL.

And what do you want with my wife? [*Turns.*] Do you know him, Ellida?

ELLIDA.

[*Softly, wringing her hands.*] Do I know him? Yes, yes, yes!

WANGEL.

[*Hastily.*] Well?

ELLIDA.

Oh, it is he, Wangel! It is he himself! He,—you know——!

WANGEL.

What? What do you say? [*Turns.*] Are you the man Johnston, who was——?

THE STRANGER.

Well—you can call me Johnston if you like. It is not my name though.

WANGEL.

Is it not?

THE STRANGER.

Not now, it isn't.

WANGEL.

And what can you want with my wife? For of course you know that the lighthouse-keeper's daughter has been married for years. And you must know, too, who her husband is.

THE STRANGER.

I have known that for more than three years.

ELLIDA.

[*Eagerly.*] How did you come to know it?

THE STRANGER.

I was on my way home to you. I came across an old newspaper—one from these parts; and in it was the notice of your marriage.

ELLIDA.

[*Looking straight before her.*] My marriage—— So it was t h a t——

THE STRANGER.

It came upon me very strangely. For the linking of the rings—that was a marriage, too, Ellida.

ELLIDA.

[*Puts her hands before her face.*] Oh——!

WANGEL.

How dare you——?

THE STRANGER.

Had you forgotten it?

ELLIDA.

[*Cries out, as though she felt his look.*] Do not stand looking at me like that!

WANGEL.

[*Confronting him.*] Be so good as to address yourself to me, and not to her. Briefly now—since you understand the situation—what can you have to do here? Why do you come here and seek out my wife?

THE STRANGER.

I had promised Ellida that I would come to her as soon as I could.

WANGEL.

Ellida——! Again!

THE STRANGER.

And Ellida had promised faithfully to wait for me till I came.

WANGEL.

I observe that you call my wife by her first name. That sort of familiarity is not usual here.

THE STRANGER.

I know that very well. But as she belongs first of all to me——

WANGEL.

To you! Still——!

ELLIDA.

[*Shrinks behind* WANGEL.] Oh——! He will never set me free!

WANGEL.

To you! You say she belongs to you!

Copyright, 1909, by Grauer & Zink

Henrik Ibsen, about 1890

THE STRANGER.

Has she told you about the two rings? My ring and Ellida's?

WANGEL.

Yes, certainly. But what then? She broke it off again afterwards. You received her letters; so you know it perfectly well.

THE STRANGER.

Ellida and I were fully agreed that the linking of the rings was to be in every way as valid and binding as a marriage.

ELLIDA.

But I refuse, I tell you! Never in this world will I have anything more to do with you! Do not look at me like that! I will not, I tell you!

WANGEL.

You must be out of your senses if you think you can come here and found any claim upon such a piece of child's-play as that.

THE STRANGER.

That is true. In the way you mean, I have certainly no claim upon her.

WANGEL.

What do you want to do then? You cannot imagine that you can take her from me by force,—against her own will!

THE STRANGER.

No. What would be the use of that? If Ellida is to be mine, she must come of her own free will.

ELLIDA.

[*Starts and cries out.*] Of my own free will——

WANGEL.

And can you suppose——!

ELLIDA.

[*To herself.*] My own free will——!

WANGEL.

You must be out of your mind. Take yourself off! We have nothing more to do with you.

THE STRANGER.

[*Looks at his watch.*] It will soon be time for me to go on board again. [*Advances a step.*] Well well, Ellida—now I have done what I had to do. [*Still nearer.*] I have kept the word I gave you.

ELLIDA.

[*Imploringly, shrinking away.*] Oh, do not touch me!

THE STRANGER.

I give you till to-morrow night to think it over——

WANGEL.

There is nothing to think over. Leave this place at once!

THE STRANGER.

[*Still to* ELLIDA.] I am going up the fiord in the steamer now; to-morrow night I shall return, and then I will see you again. You must wait for me here in the garden; for I prefer to settle the matter with you alone, you understand.

ELLIDA.

[*Softly and trembling.*] Oh, do you hear that, Wangel?

WANGEL.

Do not be alarmed. We shall find means to prevent this visit.

THE STRANGER.

Good-bye for the present, Ellida. To-morrow night then.

ELLIDA.

[*In a tone of entreaty.*] Oh, no, no,—do not come to-morrow night! Never come again!

THE STRANGER.

And if by that time you should be of a mind to come with me over the sea——

ELLIDA.

Oh, do not look at me like that——

THE STRANGER.

I only mean that in that case you must be ready to start.

WANGEL.

Go into the house, Ellida.

ELLIDA.

I cannot. Oh, help me! Save me, Wangel!

THE STRANGER.

For you must remember this, that if you do not come with me to-morrow, it will all be over.

ELLIDA.

[*Looks at him, trembling.*] Will it all be over? For ever——?

THE STRANGER.

[*With a nod.*] Beyond recall, Ellida! I shall never return to this country; you will never see me any more, nor hear from me either. I shall be as though dead and gone from you, for evermore.

ELLIDA.

[*Breathes uneasily.*] Oh——!

THE STRANGER.

So think carefully what you do. Good-bye. [*He climbs over the fence, stops, and says:*] Well, Ellida,—be ready to start to-morrow night; for then I will come and take you away.

[*He goes slowly and calmly along the footpath and out to the right.*

ELLIDA.

[*Looks after him a while.*] Of my own free will, he said! Think of that—he said that I should go with him of my own free will.

WANGEL.

Be calm, be calm. He is gone now, and you shall never see him again.

ELLIDA.

Oh, how can you say that? He is coming again to-morrow night.

WANGEL.

Let him come; I will see that he does not meet you.

ELLIDA.

[*Shakes her head.*] Oh Wangel, do not think that you can prevent him.

WANGEL.

Yes I can, dearest—rely upon me.

ELLIDA.

[*Musing, without listening to him.*] When he has been here—to-morrow night——? And when he has gone away in the steamer, over the sea——?

WANGEL.

Well, what then?

ELLIDA.

I wonder whether he will never—never come again?

WANGEL.

No, dear Ellida, you may feel absolutely secure on that point. What could he do here after this? He has heard now, from your own lips, that you will have nothing to do with him. That ends the whole thing.

ELLIDA.

[*To herself.*] To-morrow then—or never.

WANGEL.

And even if he should take it into his head to come again——

ELLIDA.

[*Eagerly.*] What then——?

WANGEL.

Why, we know how to make him harmless.

ELLIDA.

Oh, do not think that.

WANGEL.

We know what to do, I say! If nothing else will make him leave you in peace, then he shall answer for the murder of the captain.

ELLIDA.

[*Vehemently.*] No, no, no——! Never that! We know nothing about the murder of the captain! Absolutely nothing!

WANGEL.

We know nothing! Why, he himself confessed it to you!

ELLIDA

No, nothing about that! If you say anything, I will deny it. He shall not be caged! His place is out on the open sea. That is his home.

WANGEL.

[*Looks at her and says slowly:*] Ah, Ellida—Ellida!

ELLIDA.

[*Clings to him passionately.*] Oh dear one, faithful one—save me from that man!

WANGEL.

[*Gently disengaging himself.*] Come! Come with me!

LYNGSTRAND *and* HILDA, *both with fishing-tackle, appear from the right beside the pond.*

LYNGSTRAND.

[*Goes rapidly towards* ELLIDA.] Oh, what do you think, Mrs. Wangel—I have something wonderful to tell you!

WANGEL.

What is it?

LYNGSTRAND.

Just fancy—we have seen the American!

WANGEL.

The American?

HILDA.

Yes, I saw him too.

LYNGSTRAND.

He went round by the back of the garden, and then on board the big English steamer.

WANGEL.

Where have you known that man?

LYNGSTRAND.

I was at sea with him once. I was quite sure he was drowned; and here he appears as large as life.

WANGEL.

Do you know anything more about him?

LYNGSTRAND.

No; but I'm sure he has come back to be revenged on his faithless wife.

WANGEL.

What do you mean?

HILDA.

Mr. Lyngstrand is going to make a statue of him.

WANGEL.

I don't understand a word——

ELLIDA.

You shall hear all about it by-and-by.

ARNHOLM *and* BOLETTA *enter from the left along the footpath outside the garden fence.*

BOLETTA.

[*To those in the garden.*] Come and look! The English steamer is going up the fiord.

[*A large steamer glides slowly past at some distance.*

LYNGSTRAND.

[*To* HILDA, *near the garden fence.*] I am sure he will come down upon her to-night.

HILDA.

[*Nods.*] Upon his faithless wife—yes.

LYNGSTRAND.

Fancy,—just at midnight.

HILDA.

I think it will be thrilling.

ELLIDA.

[*Looking after the ship.*] To-morrow then——

WANGEL.

And after that, never again.

ELLIDA.

[*Softly and trembling.*] Oh Wangel—save me from myself.

WANGEL.

[*Looks anxiously at her.*] Ellida! I feel it—there is something behind all this.

ELLIDA.

All that allures is behind it.

WANGEL.

All that allures——?

ELLIDA.

That man is like the sea.

[*She goes slowly and in deep thought through the garden out to the left.* WANGEL *walks uneasily by her side, observing her intently.*

ACT FOURTH

Garden-room at Dr. Wangel's. *Doors right and left. In the back, between the two windows, an open glass door leading out to the veranda. A portion of the garden is seen below. A sofa and table in front on the left. To the right a piano, and farther back a large flower-stand. In the middle of the floor a round table with chairs about it. On the table, a rose-bush in bloom, and other plants in pots about the room. It is forenoon.*

Boletta *is seated on the sofa by the table, left, working at a piece of embroidery.* Lyngstrand *sits on a chair at the upper end of the table.* Ballested *is seated in the garden, painting.* Hilda *stands beside him, looking on.*

Lyngstrand.

[*Sits silent awhile with his arms on the table, watching* Boletta *at work.*] It must be very difficult to sew edging like that, Miss Wangel.

Boletta.

Oh no, it's not so difficult, if only you are careful to count right——

Lyngstrand.

Count? Have you to count?

Boletta.

Yes, the stitches. Look here.

LYNGSTRAND.

Why, so you must! Fancy! It's almost a kind of art. Can you draw too?

BOLETTA.

Oh yes, when I have a copy before me.

LYNGSTRAND.

Not unless?

BOLETTA.

No, not unless.

LYNGSTRAND.

Then it's not really art after all.

BOLETTA.

No, it's more of a—a knack.

LYNGSTRAND.

But I should think, now, that you could probably l e a r n art?

BOLETTA.

Even though I have no turn for it?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, in spite of that—if you could be always with a real born artist——

BOLETTA.

Do you think I could learn from him?

LYNGSTRAND.

I don't mean "learn" in the ordinary sense. But I think it would come to you by degrees—by a sort of miracle, Miss Wangel.

BOLETTA.

That is a strange idea.

LYNGSTRAND.

[*After a pause.*] Have you thought much—I mean—have you thought at all deeply and seriously about marriage, Miss Wangel?

BOLETTA.

[*Glances at him.*] About——? No.

LYNGSTRAND.

I have.

BOLETTA.

Indeed; have you?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes. I very often think about things of that sort; and particularly about marriage. And then I have read a good deal on the subject too. I think marriage may be counted a sort of miracle, the woman is transformed, as it were, by degrees and comes to resemble her husband.

BOLETTA.

Acquires his interests, you mean?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, that's just it!

BOLETTA.

Well, but what about his abilities?—his talent and skill?

LYNGSTRAND.

H'm—well—I wonder whether they, too, wouldn't——

BOLETTA.

Then do you think that what a man has mastered by reading—or by his own thought—can be passed on in this way to his wife?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, that too; by degrees; as if by a miracle. But of course I know that this could only happen in a marriage that is faithful, and loving, and really happy.

BOLETTA.

Has it never occurred to you that perhaps a husband might be absorbed in the same way into his wife? Might come to resemble her, I mean.

LYNGSTRAND.

A husband? No, I have never thought of that.

BOLETTA.

But why not the one as well as the other?

LYNGSTRAND.

No; a man has his vocation to live for, you know. And t h a t is what makes a man so strong and resolute, Miss Wangel. He has his life-work.

BOLETTA.

Every man?

LYNGSTRAND.

Oh no. I was thinking mainly of artists.

BOLETTA.

Do you think it right for an artist to marry?

LYNGSTRAND.

Most certainly; if he can find some one he really loves——

BOLETTA.

Even then it seems to me that he should rather live for his art alone.

LYNGSTRAND.

Of course he must; but he can quite well do that even if he marries.

BOLETTA.

But what about her, then?

LYNGSTRAND.

Her? Who——?

BOLETTA.

The woman he marries. What is she to live for?

LYNGSTRAND.

She too must live for his art. I should think that must be such happiness for a woman.

BOLETTA.

H'm—I am not so sure——

LYNGSTRAND.

Oh yes, Miss Wangel, believe me. It is not only all the honour and glory she enjoys through him; that, I should say, is almost the least part of it. But that she can help him to create,—that she can lighten his labour by being ever at his side, and tending him, and making life thoroughly comfortable for him. It seems to me that must be such a delight for a woman.

BOLETTA.

Oh, you don't realise how selfish you are!

LYNGSTRAND.

Am *I* selfish? Good heavens——! Oh, if you only knew me a little better——. [*Bends forward towards her.*] Miss Wangel,—when I am gone,—and I shall be soon——

BOLETTA.

[*Looks at him sympathetically.*] Oh don't get such melancholy thoughts into your head.

LYNGSTRAND.

I don't see that it is so very melancholy.

BOLETTA.

How do you mean?

LYNGSTRAND.

I shall be starting in about a month, first for home, and soon afterwards for the South.

BOLETTA.

Oh, I see. Yes, yes.

LYNGSTRAND.

Will you think of me now and then, Miss Wangel?

BOLETTA.

Yes, gladly.

LYNGSTRAND.

[*Joyfully.*] Oh, do you promise me that?

BOLETTA.

Yes, I promise.

LYNGSTRAND.

Solemnly, Miss Boletta?

BOLETTA.

Solemnly. [*Changing her tone.*] Oh, but what is the use of all this? Nothing can ever come of it.

LYNGSTRAND.

How can you say that? It would be such a joy to me to know that you were at home here thinking of me.

BOLETTA.

Yes, but what more?

LYNGSTRAND.

Well, I am not quite certain about anything more——

BOLETTA.

Nor I. So many things stand in the way; every possible thing stands in the way, it seems to me.

LYNGSTRAND.

Oh, some miracle or other might happen. A happy turn of fate—or something of that sort. For I am convinced that fortune is on my side.

BOLETTA.

[*With animation.*] Yes, that is right! Surely you think so!

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, I am perfectly convinced of it. And then—in a few years—when I come home again a famous sculptor, with plenty of money, and as well as possible——

BOLETTA.

Yes, yes; let us hope you will.

LYNGSTRAND.

You may be quite sure of it—if only you think faithfully and warmly of me while I am away in the South. And that you have promised to do.

BOLETTA.

Yes, I have. [*Shakes her head.*] But nothing will ever come of this, all the same.

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, Miss Boletta, this at least will come of it, that I shall make the easier and quicker progress with my group.

BOLETTA.

Do you think so?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, I feel it within me. And I think it will be stimulating for you too,—here in this out-of-the-way place—to know that you are, as it were, helping me to create.

BOLETTA.

[*Looks at him.*] Well—but you, on your side?

LYNGSTRAND.

I——?

BOLETTA.

[*Looks out towards the garden.*] Hush! Let us talk of something else; here comes Mr. Arnholm.

[ARNHOLM *is seen in the garden, on the left. He stops and speaks to* BALLESTED *and* HILDA.

LYNGSTRAND.

Are you fond of your old teacher, Miss Boletta?

BOLETTA.

Am I fond of him?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, I mean do you like him?

BOLETTA.

Oh yes, I do indeed; he is such a good friend and adviser. And he is always so ready to help you whenever he can.

LYNGSTRAND.

Is it not strange that he has never married?

BOLETTA.

Do you think it so strange?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes; they say he is well off.

BOLETTA.

I suppose he is. But it may not have been very easy for him to find any one who would have him.

LYNGSTRAND.

Why?

BOLETTA.

Oh, he has been the teacher of nearly every girl he knows. He says so himself.

LYNGSTRAND.

But what does t h a t matter?

BOLETTA.

Why, of course, one doesn't marry a man who has been one's teacher!

LYNGSTRAND.

Don't you think a girl could possibly love her teacher?

BOLETTA.

Not after she is quite grown up.

LYNGSTRAND.

Dear me! How odd!

BOLETTA.

[*Warningly.*] Hush, hush!

BALLESTED, *who has meanwhile collected his things, carries them out through the garden to the right.* HILDA *helps him.* ARNHOLM *comes up into the veranda and enters the room.*

ARNHOLM.

Good morning, my dear Boletta. Good morning, Mr.—— Mr.——h'm!

[*He looks annoyed, and nods coldly to* LYNGSTRAND, *who rises and bows.*

BOLETTA.

[*Rises and goes to* ARNHOLM.] Good morning, Mr. Arnholm

ARNHOLM.

How are you all here to-day?

BOLETTA.

Thanks, very well.

ARNHOLM.

Has your step-mother gone to bathe to-day again?

BOLETTA.

No, she is up in her room.

ARNHOLM.

Not quite well?

BOLETTA.

I don't know. She has locked herself in.

ARNHOLM.

H'm—has she?

LYNGSTRAND.

Mrs. Wangel seemed very much upset about that American yesterday.

ARNHOLM.

What do y o u know about it?

LYNGSTRAND.

I told Mrs. Wangel that I had seen him in the flesh, going round behind the garden.

ARNHOLM.

Oh indeed.

BOLETTA.

[*To* ARNHOLM.] You and father sat up late last night, did you not?

ARNHOLM.

Yes, pretty late. We had an important question to discuss.

BOLETTA.

Did you get in a word with him about me and my affairs?

ARNHOLM.

No, my dear Boletta. I could not manage it; he was so absorbed in something else.

BOLETTA.

[*Sighs.*] Ah yes,—he always is.

ARNHOLM.

[*Looking significantly at her.*] But remember, you and I are to have another talk about these things, presently.—Where is your father now? Has he gone out?

BOLETTA.

I think he must be down at the surgery. I'll go and fetch him.

ARNHOLM.

No thank you, don't do that. I would rather go down to him.

BOLETTA.

[*Listening to the left.*] Wait a moment, Mr. Arnholm. I think I hear father coming downstairs. Yes. He must have been up attending to her.

DR. WANGEL *enters by the door on the left.*

WANGEL.

[*Holds out his hand to* ARNHOLM.] Ah, my dear friend, are you here already? It's good of you to come so early; there are still several things I want to discuss with you.

BOLETTA.

[*To* LYNGSTRAND.] Shall we join Hilda in the garden for a little while?

LYNGSTRAND.

With all the pleasure in life, Miss Wangel.

[*He and* BOLETTA *go down into the garden, and out among the trees in the background.*

ARNHOLM.

[*Who has been following them with his eyes, turns to* WANGEL.] Do you know much about that young man?

WANGEL.

No, very little.

ARNHOLM.

Then do you like him to be so much with the girls?

WANGEL.

Is he much with them? I really hadn't noticed it.

ARNHOLM.

Don't you think you ought to keep an eye on that sort of thing?

WANGEL.

Yes, no doubt you are right. But, bless my soul, what is a poor fellow to do? The girls have got so accustomed to look after themselves; they will not listen to a word, either from me or from Ellida.

ARNHOLM.

Not even from her?

WANGEL.

No. And besides, I cannot expect her to interfere in such matters; it is not at all in her way. [*Breaking off.*] But that was not what we were going to talk about. Tell me—have you given any more thought to it?—to all that I told you last night?

ARNHOLM.

I have thought of nothing else, ever since we parted.

WANGEL.

And what do you think I ought to do in the matter?

ARNHOLM.

My dear Doctor, I think that you, as a physician, ought to know better than I.

WANGEL.

Oh, if you only knew how difficult it is for a physician to form a valid judgment in the case of a patient he loves so dearly! And this is no common disorder either—no case for an ordinary physician, or for ordinary remedies.

ARNHOLM.

How is she to-day?

WANGEL.

I have just been up to see her, and she appeared to me quite calm. But behind all her moods something seems to be hidden that eludes me entirely. And then she is so variable—so incalculable—so subject to sudden changes.

ARNHOLM.

No doubt that is due to her morbid state of mind.

WANGEL.

Not entirely. The germ of it all is innate in her. Ellida belongs to the sea-folk; that is the trouble.

ARNHOLM.

What do you mean precisely, my dear Doctor?

WANGEL.

Have you not noticed that the people who live out by the open sea are like a race apart? They seem almost to live the life of the sea itself. There is the surge of the sea—and its ebb and flow too—both in their thoughts and in their feelings. And they never bear transplantation. No, I should have thought of t h a t before. It was a positive sin against Ellida to take her away from the sea and bring her in here!

ARNHOLM.

Have you come to look at it in that light?

WANGEL.

Yes, more and more; but I ought to have known it from the first. Oh, I did really know it then too, but I would not acknowledge it to myself. I loved her so much, you see! And consequently I thought first of myself. In fact, I was utterly and unpardonably selfish.

ARNHOLM.

H'm,—I am afraid every man is a trifle selfish under those circumstances. But I can't say that I have noticed that vice in you, Dr. Wangel.

WANGEL.

[*Wandering uneasily up and down.*] Oh yes! And I have been so since, as well. I am so much, much older than she; I ought to have been to her like a father and a guide in one. I ought to have done my best to develop and clarify her intelligence. But unfortunately I have done nothing of the sort. I have not had energy enough, you see! And in fact I preferred to have her just as she was. But then she grew worse and worse, and I was at my wits' end to know what to do. [*Lower.*] That is why I turned to you in my perplexity, and asked you to come to us.

ARNHOLM.

[*Looks at him in astonishment.*] What! Was that why you wrote to me?

WANGEL.

Yes; but don't say anything about it.

ARNHOLM.

My dear Doctor,—what in the world—what good did you suppose *I* could do? I don't understand.

WANGEL.

No, of course you do not; I had got upon a wrong scent. I fancied that Ellida had once cared for you, and that she still had a secret leaning in your direction. So I thought it might perhaps do her good to see you again, and have a talk with you about home and old times.

ARNHOLM.

Then it was your wife you meant when you wrote that some one here was waiting and—and perhaps longing for me!

WANGEL.

Yes; who else?

ARNHOLM.

[*Quickly.*] Of course, of course.—But I did not understand you.

WANGEL.

Naturally not, as I said before. I was on an entirely wrong scent.

ARNHOLM.

And you call yourself selfish!

WANGEL.

Oh, I had such a great error to atone for. I felt I had no right to reject any expedient that could possibly ease her mind a little.

ARNHOLM.

What do you take to be the real explanation of the power this stranger exercises over her?

WANGEL.

H'm, my dear friend—there may be sides to that question that don't admit of explanation.

ARNHOLM.

Something inexplicable in itself, do you mean? Entirely inexplicable?

WANGEL.

Inexplicable for the present, at any rate.

ARNHOLM.

Do you believe in such things?

WANGEL.

I neither believe nor disbelieve. I simply do not know. So I suspend my judgment.

ARNHOLM.

But tell me one thing: that strange, uncanny idea of hers about the child's eyes——

WANGEL.

[*Eagerly.*] I don't in the least believe that about the eyes! I w i l l not believe any such thing! It must be pure imagination on her part; nothing else.

ARNHOLM.

Did you notice the man's eyes when you saw him yesterday?

WANGEL.

Yes, certainly I did.

ARNHOLM.

And you found no sort of likeness?

WANGEL.

[*Evasively.*] H'm—upon my soul I don't know what to say. It was not quite light when I saw him; and besides, Ellida had talked so much about this likeness beforehand—I don't think it was possible for me to observe him without any bias.

ARNHOLM.

No, no; very likely not. But then the other point: that all this dread and unrest came upon her just at the very time when this stranger would seem to have been on his way home?

WANGEL.

Well you see—that again is a belief she must have imagined and dreamt herself into, since the day before yesterday. It did not come upon her at all so suddenly—so instantaneously—as she now maintains. But since she heard from this young Lyngstrand that Johnston or Friman—or whatever he is called—was on his way home three years ago—in March—she has evidently persuaded herself that her mental trouble came on in the very same month.

ARNHOLM.

And did it not?

WANGEL.

Not at all. There had been unmistakable symptoms of it long before that.—It is true she happened—by chance—to have a rather severe attack precisely in the month of March, three years ago——

ARNHOLM.

Well then——!

WANGEL.

Oh, but that is quite easily accounted for by the circumstances—the condition—she happened to be in at that time.

ARNHOLM.

The indications may be read in either way, then.

WANGEL.

[*Wringing his hands.*] And to be powerless to help her! To be at the end of one's resources! To see no sort of remedy——!

ARNHOLM.

What if you made up your mind to a change of residence—to move to some other place, where she might live under conditions that seemed to her more home-like?

WANGEL.

My dear fellow, do you think I haven't suggested t h a t to her? I proposed that we should move out to Skioldvik. But she will not.

ARNHOLM.

Not that either?

WANGEL.

No. She thinks it would be useless; and I daresay she is right too.

ARNHOLM.

H'm—do you think so?

WANGEL.

Yes; and besides—on considering the matter more closely—I really don't see how I could manage it. I scarcely think I should be justified, on the girls' account, in moving to such an out-of-the-way corner. After all, they must live where there is at least s o m e chance of their one day being able to marry.

ARNHOLM.

To marry? Have you that so much on your mind already?

WANGEL.

Why, yes, of course; I must think of that too! But then—on the other hand—the thought of my poor suffering Ellida——! Oh, my dear Arnholm—wherever I turn, I seem to stand between fire and water!

ARNHOLM.

There may, perhaps, be no need for you to trouble about Boletta—— [*Breaking off.*] I wonder where she —where they have gone?

[*He goes up to the open door and looks out.*

WANGEL.

[*Beside the piano.*] Oh I should be so glad to make any possible sacrifice—for all three of them.—If only I knew what!

ELLIDA *enters by the door on the left.*

ELLIDA.

[*Rapidly to* WANGEL.] Be sure you do not go out this morning.

WANGEL.

No no, certainly not; I will stay at home with you. [*Points to* ARNHOLM, *who approaches.*] But you haven't said good morning to our friend?

ELLIDA.

[*Turns.*] Oh, are you there, Mr. Arnholm? [*Holds out her hand.*] Good morning.

ARNHOLM.

Good morning, Mrs. Wangel. You have not gone for your bathe to-day as usual?

ELLIDA.

No, no, no! I couldn't think of it to-day. Won't you sit down for a moment?

ARNHOLM.

No thank you—not just now. [*Looks at* WANGEL.] I promised the girls I would join them in the garden.

ELLIDA.

Heaven knows whether you'll find them in the garden. I never know where they may have got to.

WANGEL.

Oh yes, they are probably down by the pond.

ARNHOLM.

I daresay I shall find them.

[*He nods and passes across the veranda into the garden, and out to the right.*

ELLIDA.

What o'clock is it, Wangel?

WANGEL.

[*Looks at his watch.*] It's a little past eleven.

ELLIDA.

A little past; and at eleven or half-past to-night the steamer will be here. Oh, if it only were over!

WANGEL.

[*Goes closer to her.*] Dear Ellida, there is one thing I should like to ask you about.

ELLIDA.

What is it?

WANGEL.

The night before last—up at the Prospect—you said that during the past three years you had often seen him bodily before you.

ELLIDA.

So I have. I assure you I have.

WANGEL.

Well, but how did you see him?

ELLIDA.

How did I see him?

WANGEL.

I mean—what did he look like when you appeared to see him before you?

ELLIDA.

Why, my dear Wangel,—you know yourself now what he looks like.

WANGEL.

And he looked like that when you seemed to see him?

ELLIDA.

Yes, he did.

WANGEL.

Exactly as you saw him in reality last evening?

ELLIDA.

Yes, exactly.

WANGEL.

Then how did it happen that you did not at once recognise him?

ELLIDA.

[*Starts.*] Did I not?

WANGEL.

No. You yourself told me afterwards that at first you did not in the least know who the stranger was.

ELLIDA.

[*Impressed.*] Yes, I really believe you are right! Was not that strange, Wangel? Think of my not knowing him at once!

WANGEL.

It was only by his eyes, you said——

ELLIDA.

Oh yes—his eyes! His eyes!

WANGEL.

Well, but up at the Prospect you said that he had always appeared to you just as he was when you parted, ten years ago.

ELLIDA.

Did I say that?

WANGEL.

Yes.

ELLIDA.

Then he must have looked at that time much as he does now.

WANGEL.

No. You gave quite another description of him on the way home, the night before last. Ten years ago he had no beard, you said. He was quite differently dressed too. And the breast-pin with the pearl in it——? He wore nothing of the sort yesterday.

ELLIDA.

No, he didn't.

WANGEL.

[*Looks intently at her.*] Now think a little, dear Ellida. Perhaps you cannot remember now what he looked like when you parted from him at Bratthammer?

ELLIDA.

[*Reflectively, closing her eyes for a moment.*] Not quite distinctly. No—I can't at all to-day. Isn't that strange?

WANGEL.

Not so very strange. A new and real figure has presented itself to you, and that obscures the old one—so that you can no longer see it.

ELLIDA.

Do you think so, Wangel?

WANGEL.

Yes; and it obscures your morbid illusions too; so it is a good thing the reality has shown itself.

ELLIDA.

Good! Do you call it a good thing?

WANGEL.

Yes; its coming—may be your salvation.

ELLIDA.

[*Seats herself on the sofa.*] Wangel—come here and sit by me. I must tell you all my thoughts.

WANGEL.

Yes do, dear Ellida.

[*He seats himself on a chair at the other side of the table.*

ELLIDA.

It was really a great misfortune—for both of us—that we two, of all people, should come together.

WANGEL.

[*Starts.*] What do you say?

ELLIDA.

Oh yes it was—and it could not but be. It could lead to nothing but unhappiness—especially considering the way we came together.

WANGEL.

Why, what was wrong with the way——?

ELLIDA.

Listen now, Wangel,—it is useless for us to go on any longer lying to ourselves—and to each other.

WANGEL.

A r e we doing so? Lying do you say?

ELLIDA.

Yes, lying. Or at any rate—concealing the truth. The truth—the sheer unvarnished truth is t h i s: you came out there and—bought me.

WANGEL.

Bought—— Did you say—bought?

ELLIDA.

Oh, I was not a bit better than you. I joined in the bargain. I went and sold myself to you.

WANGEL.

[*Looks at her, deeply pained.*] Ellida,—have you the heart to say so?

ELLIDA.

Why, what else can you call it? You could not bear the void in your house; you looked about for a new wife——

WANGEL.

And for a new mother for the children, Ellida.

ELLIDA.

That too, perhaps—incidentally, as it were. Although—you did not in the least know whether I was fit to be a mother to them. You had only seen me and spoken with me once or twice. But you took a fancy to me, and so——

WANGEL.

Well, you may give it what name you please.

ELLIDA.

And I, for my part——. There was I, helpless and forlorn, and utterly alone. What more natural than that I should accept the bargain—when you came and offered to maintain me all my life.

WANGEL.

I assure you I did not think of it in that light, my dear Ellida. I asked you honestly if you would share with me and the children the little I could call my own.

ELLIDA.

Yes, you did. But, little or much, I ought not to have accepted! I should never have accepted at any price! I should never have sold myself! Better the meanest labour—better the deepest poverty—of my own free will —by my own choice!

WANGEL.

[*Rising.*] Then have the five or six years we have lived together been utterly wasted for you?

ELLIDA.

Oh, you must not think that, Wangel! I have had all from you that any one could possibly desire. But I did not come into your home of my own free will,—that is the thing.

WANGEL.

[*Looks at her.*] Not of your free will?

ELLIDA.

No; it was not of my own free will that I cast in my lot with yours.

WANGEL.

[*Softly.*] Ah, I remember—the phrase he used yesterday.

ELLIDA.

The whole secret lies in that phrase. It has thrown a new light on things for me; so that I see it all now.

WANGEL.

What do you see?

ELLIDA.

I see that the life we two lead with each other—is really no marriage at all.

WANGEL.

[*Bitterly.*] There you are right. The life we n o w lead is no marriage at all.

ELLIDA.

Nor the life we led before; never; not from the outset. [*Looks straight before her.*] The first—t h a t might have been a real and true marriage.

WANGEL.

The first? What "first" do you mean?

ELLIDA.

Mine,—with h i m.

WANGEL.

[*Looks at her in astonishment.*] I cannot understand you at all!

ELLIDA.

Oh my dear Wangel,—do not let us lie to each other; nor to ourselves.

WANGEL.

No, of course not! But what then?

ELLIDA.

Why, don't you see—we can never get away from this —that a voluntary promise is to the full as binding as a marriage.

WANGEL.

Why, what in the world——!

ELLIDA.

[*Rises impetuously.*] Let me leave you, Wangel!

WANGEL.

Ellida——! Ellida——!

ELLIDA.

Yes, yes—you must let me! I can assure you there will be nothing else for it in the end—after the way we two came together.

WANGEL.

[*Controlling his emotion.*] So it has come to this!

ELLIDA.

It h a d to come to this; no other end was possible.

WANGEL.

[*Looks sorrowfully at her.*] So even in our daily life together I have not won you. You have never, never been wholly mine.

ELLIDA.

Oh Wangel—if only I could love you as I gladly would! As tenderly as you deserve! But I feel quite clearly—it will never be.

WANGEL.

A divorce then? It is a divorce,—a formal, legal divorce,—that you want?

ELLIDA.

My dear, you do not understand me at all. It is not the forms that I care about. These external things seem to me to matter nothing. What I wish is that we two should agree, of our own free will, to release each other.

WANGEL.

[*Bitterly, nods slowly.*] To cancel the bargain,—yes.

ELLIDA.

[*Eagerly.*] Precisely! To cancel the bargain.

WANGEL.

And after that, Ellida? Afterwards? Have you thought of the outlook for both of us? What shape will our lives take—both yours and mine?

ELLIDA.

We must not let that influence us. The future must shape itself as best it can. This that I am begging of you, Wangel,—this is the chief thing! Set me free! Give me back my full freedom!

WANGEL.

Ellida—this is a terrible demand you make upon me. Let me at least have time to collect myself and come to a resolve. Let us discuss the matter more thoroughly. And do you, too, give yourself time to reflect what you are doing!

ELLIDA.

But there is no time to waste on all that. You must give me back my freedom this very day.

WANGEL.

Why to-day?

ELLIDA.

Because it is to-night that he is coming.

WANGEL.

[*Starts.*] Coming! He! What has the stranger to do with this?

ELLIDA.

I want to meet him in full freedom.

WANGEL.

And what—what do you intend to do then?

ELLIDA.

I do not want to take refuge in the plea that I am another man's wife—or that I have no choice left me. For then my decision would decide nothing.

WANGEL.

You talk of choice! Choice, Ellida! Choice in this matter!

ELLIDA.

Yes, choose I must—freely choose either course. I must be free to let him go away alone—or—to go with him.

WANGEL.

Do you understand what you are saying? Go with him! Place your whole fate in his hands!

ELLIDA.

Did I not place my whole fate in y o u r hands? And that—without thinking twice.

WANGEL.

That may be. But he! He! A total stranger! A man you know so little about!

ELLIDA.

I knew perhaps even less of you; and yet I went with you.

WANGEL.

At least you knew pretty well what kind of life you were entering upon. But now? Now? Reflect! What do you know now? Nothing whatever: not even who he is—or what he is.

ELLIDA.

[*Looking straight before her.*] That is true. But that is just the terrible thing.

WANGEL.

Yes, terrible indeed——

ELLIDA.

And that is why I feel as if I m u s t give way to it.

WANGEL.

[*Looks at her.*] Because it seems to you terrible?

ELLIDA.

Yes, just because of that.

WANGEL.

[*Nearer.*] Tell me, Ellida—what do you really mean by "terrible"?

ELLIDA.

[*Reflects.*] I call a thing terrible—when it both frightens and fascinates me.

WANGEL.

Fascinates?

ELLIDA.

Most of all when it fascinates me—I think.

WANGEL.

[*Slowly.*] You are akin to the sea.

ELLIDA.

There is terror in that too.

WANGEL.

And in yourself no less. You both frighten and fascinate.[1]

[1] For another rendering of the foregoing very difficult passage —especially difficult because of the frequent occurrence of "det grufulde" "the terrible" in other contexts—the reader who is curious in such matters may consult the five-volume edition of Ibsen's *Prose Dramas* (vol. v. p. 210), where he will find it discussed in a footnote.

ELLIDA.

Do you think so, Wangel?

WANGEL.

I see that I have never really known you; never thoroughly. I am beginning to understand that now.

ELLIDA.

And therefore you must set me free! Loose me from every tie to you and yours! I am not the woman you took me for; you see that now yourself. Now we can part in mutual understanding—and of our own free will.

WANGEL.

[*Gloomily.*] It would perhaps be best for us both—to part. But for all that, I c a n n o t! To me it is you that are "terrible," Ellida. And fascinating—that you are above all things.

ELLIDA.

Do you say so?

WANGEL.

Let us try to get through this day with no false step—to act calmly and collectedly. I c a n n o t release you and let you go to-day. I must not—for your own sake, Ellida. I assert my right and my duty to protect you.

ELLIDA.

Protect? What is there to protect me against? It is not any outward force or violence that threatens me. The terrible thing lies deeper, Wangel! The terrible

thing is—the fascination I feel in my own mind; and what can you do against that?

WANGEL.

I can strengthen and support you in resisting it.

ELLIDA.

Yes—if I had the w i l l to resist it.

WANGEL.

Have you not the will?

ELLIDA.

Oh, that is just what I don't know!

WANGEL.

To-night all will be decided, dear Ellida——

ELLIDA.

[*Breaks out.*] Yes, think of it——! The decision so near! The decision for all time!

WANGEL.

——and then to-morrow——

ELLIDA.

Yes, to-morrow! Perhaps I shall have forfeited my true future!

WANGEL.

Your true——?

ELLIDA.

A whole, full life of freedom forfeited—forfeited for me! And perhaps—for him too.

WANGEL.

[*In a lower tone, seizing her by the wrist.*] Ellida,—do you love this stranger?

ELLIDA.

Do I——? Oh how can I tell! I only know that to me he is terrible, and that——

WANGEL.

——and that——?

ELLIDA.

[*Tears herself away.*] ——and that I feel as though my place were with him.

WANGEL.

[*Bows his head.*] I begin to understand.

ELLIDA.

And what help, what remedy have you to offer me?

WANGEL.

[*Looks sorrowfully at her.*] To-morrow—he will be gone. Then you will be safe from disaster; and then I promise to release you and let you go. We will cancel the bargain, Ellida.

ELLIDA.

Oh Wangel——! To-morrow—it will be too late——!

WANGEL.

[*Looks out towards the garden.*] The children! The children——! Let us at least spare them—for the present.

ARNHOLM, BOLETTA, HILDA, *and* LYNGSTRAND *appear in the garden.* LYNGSTRAND *takes leave without entering the house, and goes to the left. The others come into the room.*

ARNHOLM.

Ah, I can tell you we have been laying great plans——

HILDA.

We want to go out on the fiord this evening, and——

BOLETTA.

No, no, don't tell!

WANGEL.

We two have also been laying plans.

ARNHOLM.

Ah—really?

WANGEL.

To-morrow Ellida is going to Skioldvik—for a time.

BOLETTA.

Going away——?

ARNHOLM.

That is very wise, Mrs. Wangel.

WANGEL.

Ellida wants to go home again; home to the sea.

HILDA.

[*With a little rush towards* ELLIDA.] Are you going away? Going away from us!

ELLIDA.

[*Startled.*] Why, Hilda! What is the matter with you?

HILDA.

[*Restraining herself.*] Oh, nothing at all. [*In a low tone, turning from her.*] Go by all means!

BOLETTA.

[*Anxiously.*] Father, I can see—you are going away too—to Skioldvik!

WANGEL.

No, certainly not! I shall perhaps run out now and then——

BOLETTA.

And home again——?

WANGEL.

Yes, home——

BOLETTA.

——now and then, I suppose.

WANGEL.

My dear child, it m u s t be so. [*He walks away.*

ARNHOLM.

[*Whispers.*] I have something to say to you by-and-by, Boletta.

[*He goes over to* WANGEL. *They converse in a low tone by the door.*

ELLIDA.

[*Softly to* BOLETTA.] What was the matter with Hilda? She seemed quite beside herself!

BOLETTA.

Have you never seen what Hilda has been thirsting for, day after day?

ELLIDA.

Thirsting for?

BOLETTA.

Ever since you came into the house!

ELLIDA.

No, no,—what is it?

BOLETTA.

One word of affection from you.

ELLIDA.

Ah——! What if there were work for me to do h e r e!

[*She clasps her hands above her head and looks immovably before her, as if a prey to conflicting thoughts and moods.*

[WANGEL *and* ARNHOLM *come forward conversing in whispers.*

[BOLETTA *goes and looks into the side room on the right. Then she throws the door wide open.*

BOLETTA.

Well, father dear—dinner is on the table,——

WANGEL.

[*With forced composure.*] Is it, child? That's right. Come along, Arnholm! We will drink a parting cup with—with "the lady from the sea."

[*They go towards the door on the right.*

ACT FIFTH

The remote corner of Dr. Wangel's *garden, by the carp-pond. Deepening summer twilight.*

Arnholm, Boletta, Lyngstrand, *and* Hilda, *in a boat on the fiord, are punting along the shore from the left.*

Hilda.

Look, we can easily jump ashore here!

Arnholm.

No no, don't do it!

Lyngstrand.

I can't jump, Miss Hilda.

Hilda.

Can't you jump either, Mr. Arnholm?

Arnholm.

I would rather not.

Boletta.

Let us land at the bathing-house steps.

[*They punt the boat out to the right.*

At that moment Ballested *appears from the right, on the footpath, carrying music and a French horn. He greets those in the boat, turns, and talks to them. Their answers are heard farther and farther off.*

BALLESTED.

What do you say?—Yes of course it's in honour of the English steamer. It's her last trip this year. But if you want to enjoy the music you mustn't put off too long. [*Calls out.*] What? [*Shakes his head.*] Can't hear what you say!

[ELLIDA, *with a shawl over her head, comes in from the left, followed by* DR. WANGEL.

WANGEL.

But, my dear Ellida, I assure you there is ample time.

ELLIDA.

No, no,—there is not! He may come at any moment.

BALLESTED.

[*Outside, by the garden fence.*] Ah, good evening, Doctor! Good evening, Mrs. Wangel!

WANGEL.

[*Notices him.*] Oh, are you there? Is there to be music to-night again?

BALLESTED.

Yes. The Musical Society proposes to show what it can do. There's no lack of festive occasions at this season. To-night it's in honour of the Englishman.

ELLIDA.

The English steamer! Is it in sight already?

BALLESTED.

Not yet; but you see it comes down the fiord among the islands. It is on you before you know where you are.

ELLIDA.

Yes,—that is true.

WANGEL.

[*Partly to* ELLIDA.] This is the last trip. After to-night we shall see no more of it.

BALLESTED.

A melancholy thought, Doctor. But that's why we are turning out in its honour, as I said before. Ah yes, ah yes! The happy summer time is drawing to a close "Soon will all the straits be ice-bound," as they say in the tragedy.[1]

ELLIDA.

All the straits ice-bound,—yes.

BALLESTED.

Mournful reflection! For weeks and months now we have been joyful children of the summer; it is hard to reconcile oneself to the dark days. At first, that is to say; for people c a n alcli—ac—climatise themselves, Mrs. Wangel. Yes they can indeed.

[*He bows and goes out to the left.*

ELLIDA.

[*Looks out across the fiord.*] Oh this torturing suspense! This intolerable last half-hour before the decision!

[1] "Snart er alle sunde lukket."—Oehlenschläger's *Hakon Jarl.*

WANGEL.

Then you are still bent on speaking with him yourself?

ELLIDA.

I m u s t speak with him myself; for I must make my choice of my own free will.

WANGEL.

You have no choice, Ellida. You cannot be allowed to choose—*I* will not allow you.

ELLIDA.

You can never prevent my choosing; neither you nor any one else. You can forbid me to go away with him—to cast in my lot with him—if I should choose that. You can forcibly detain me here, against my will. That you can do. But the choice in my innermost soul—my choice of him and not of you,—in case I should and must choose so,—that you cannot prevent.

WANGEL.

No, you are right; I cannot prevent that.

ELLIDA.

And then I have nothing to help me to resist! At home here there is nothing whatever to attach and bind me. I am utterly without root in your house, Wangel. The children are not mine—their hearts, I mean. They have never been mine.—When I go away—if I do go away—either with him to-night or out to Skioldvik to-morrow,—I have not a key to give up, not a direction to

leave behind me, about anything in the world. You see how utterly without root I am in your house; how I have stood entirely outside of everything from the very first moment.

WANGEL.

You yourself willed it so.

ELLIDA.

No, I did not. I had no will one way or the other. I have merely let everything remain as I found it the day I came. It is you—and no one else—who have willed it so.

WANGEL.

I meant to do what was best for you.

ELLIDA

Oh yes, Wangel, I know that so well! But now all this must be paid for; it will have its revenge. There is nothing here now that has any binding power over me—nothing to support—nothing to help me. There is no counter-fascination for me in what should have been the dearest treasure of our common life.

WANGEL.

I see that well enough, Ellida; and so from to-morrow you shall have your freedom again. Hereafter you shall live your own life.

ELLIDA.

You call that my own life! Oh no, my own true life slid into a wrong groove when I joined it to yours.

[*Clenches her hands together in fear and agitation.*] And now—to-night—in half an hour—the man I have forsaken will be here—the man to whom my faith should have been inviolable, as his has been to me! Now he is coming to offer me—for the last and only time—a chance of beginning life afresh—of living my own real life—the life that at once frightens and fascinates me—and that I c a n n o t forego. Not of my own free will!

WANGEL.

That is just why you require your husband—and your physician also—to take the power out of your hands, and to act on your behalf.

ELLIDA.

Yes, Wangel, I understand that very well. Oh, there are times, you may be sure, when I feel as though there would be safety and peace in clinging close to you, and trying to defy all the powers that frighten and fascinate me. But I cannot do it. No, no,—I cannot do it!

WANGEL.

Come, Ellida—let us walk up and down a little.

ELLIDA.

I should like to; but I dare not. You know he said that I was to wait for him here.

WANGEL.

Do come. You have plenty of time yet.

ELLIDA.

Do you think so?

WANGEL.

Ample time, I assure you.

ELLIDA.

Let us walk a little then.

[*They go out in front, to the right. At the same moment* ARNHOLM *and* BOLETTA *appear by the upper bank of the pond.*

BOLETTA.

[*Catching sight of the retreating figures.*] Look there——!

ARNHOLM.

[*Softly.*] Hush! Let them go.

BOLETTA.

Can you understand what has been passing between them these last few days?

ARNHOLM.

Have you noticed anything?

BOLETTA.

H a v e I noticed——!

ARNHOLM.

Anything particular?

BOLETTA.

Oh yes; many things. Have you not?

ARNHOLM.

Well, I don't quite know——

BOLETTA.

Yes, I am sure you have; only you won't admit it.

ARNHOLM.

I think it will do your stepmother good to take this little trip.

BOLETTA.

Do you?

ARNHOLM.

Yes; I fancy it would be a good thing for every one if she were to get away a little now and then.

BOLETTA.

If she goes home to Skioldvik to-morrow, she will certainly never come back again.

ARNHOLM.

Why, my dear Boletta, what have you got into your head?

BOLETTA.

I am perfectly convinced of it. Just you wait! You shall see—she won't return. Not while Hilda and I are at home, at any rate.

ARNHOLM.

Hilda too?

BOLETTA.

Well, perhaps Hilda might not matter so much. She is hardly more than a child yet; and I believe in her heart she worships Ellida. But with me it is different, you see; a stepmother who is not so very much older than oneself——

ARNHOLM.

My dear Boletta—you may not have so very long to wait before leaving home.

BOLETTA.

[*Eagerly.*] Do you think so? Have you spoken to father about it?

ARNHOLM.

Yes, I have done that too.

BOLETTA.

Well—and what did he say?

ARNHOLM.

H'm—your father is so absorbed in other thoughts just now——

BOLETTA.

Yes, yes, that is just what I told you.

ARNHOLM.

But so much I ascertained from him, that you must not count upon any help from that quarter.

BOLETTA.

Not——?

ARNHOLM.

He put his position quite clearly before me, and showed that anything of the kind was a sheer impossibility for him.

BOLETTA.

[*Reproachfully.*] Then how could you have the heart to stand there and make game of me?

ARNHOLM.

Indeed I did not, dear Boletta. It depends entirely upon yourself whether you will leave home or not.

BOLETTA.

Depends upon me, you say?

ARNHOLM.

Whether you will go out into the world and learn all that your heart desires. Whether you will take part in all that, at home here, you so long for. Whether you will live your life under happier conditions, Boletta. What do you say?

BOLETTA.

[*Clasping her hands.*] Oh how glorious——! But all this is utterly impossible. If father neither will nor can—— There is no one else in the whole world that I can turn to.

ARNHOLM.

Could you not let your old—your former tutor come to your aid?

BOLETTA.

You, Mr. Arnholm? Would you really——?

ARNHOLM.

Stand by you? Yes, with the greatest of pleasure, both in word and deed; that you may rely upon. Do you accept my offer then? Tell me! Do you consent?

BOLETTA.

Do I consent! To leave home—to see the world—to learn something really worth knowing—to do everything that has seemed to me most delightful and impossible——?

ARNHOLM.

Yes, all this is now within your reach, if only you will.

BOLETTA.

And you will help me to this unspeakable happiness. Oh—but tell me—c a n I accept so great a gift from a stranger?

ARNHOLM.

You can quite well accept it from me, Boletta. From me you may accept anything.

BOLETTA.

[*Seizes his hands.*] Yes, I really think I may. I don't know how it is, but—— [*With an outburst of emotion.*]

Oh—I could both laugh and cry for joy!—for sheer happiness! Oh—to think that I shall learn what life is, after all; I was beginning to be so afraid that it would slip away from me.

ARNHOLM.

You need not be afraid of that, dear Boletta. But now you must tell me quite frankly whether there is anything —any tie that binds you here?

BOLETTA.

Any tie? No, none.

ARNHOLM.

None at all?

BOLETTA.

No, none whatever. That is,—of course father is a tie —in a way. And Hilda too. But——

ARNHOLM.

Well—your father you will have to leave sooner or later; and Hilda too will one day take her own path in life; that is only a question of time. But otherwise there is nothing to bind you, Boletta? No engagement of any sort?

BOLETTA.

No, nothing of the kind. So far as that is concerned, I can quite well go wherever I please.

ARNHOLM.

Well then, if that is the case, my dear Boletta—you shall come away with me.

BOLETTA.

[*Claps her hands.*] Oh great heavens—what a joy to think of.

ARNHOLM.

I hope you have full confidence in me?

BOLETTA.

Yes, indeed I have.

ARNHOLM.

And you can place yourself and your future fully and fearlessly in my hands, Boletta? You feel you can, do you not?

BOLETTA.

Oh yes, certainly! Why should I not? Can you doubt it? You, my old tutor—my tutor in the old days, I mean.

ARNHOLM.

Not only because of that. I do not lay so much stress on that side of the matter. But—well—since you are free then, Boletta—since there is no tie that binds you,—I ask you—if you would be willing—willing to unite yourself to me—for life?

BOLETTA.

[*Starts back in fear.*] Oh—what are you saying?

ARNHOLM.

For your whole life, Boletta. Will you be my wife?

BOLETTA.

[*Half to herself.*] No, no, no! This is impossible! Utterly impossible!

ARNHOLM.

Is it so utterly impossible for you to——?

BOLETTA.

You surely cannot mean what you are saying, Mr. Arnholm? [*Looks at him.*] Or—— Perhaps—— Was this what you had in mind when—when you proposed to do so much for me?

ARNHOLM.

Now you must listen to me a little, Boletta. It appears I have taken you quite by surprise.

BOLETTA.

Oh, how could such an offer—from you,—how could it fail to—to surprise me?

ARNHOLM.

No doubt you are right. You did not know, of course, —you could not know, that it was for your sake I came here just now.

BOLETTA.

Did you come here for—for my sake?

ARNHOLM.

Yes, I did, Boletta. I got a letter from your father this spring—and in it was a phrase which led me to be-

lieve—h'm—that you had kept your former tutor in—in a little more than friendly remembrance.

BOLETTA.

How could father say such a thing?

ARNHOLM.

It appears that was not what he meant at all. But in the meantime I had accustomed myself to the thought that here was a young girl waiting and longing for me to come again.—No, you mustn't interrupt me, dear Boletta! And, you see,—when a man, like myself, is no longer in the first flush of youth, such a belief—or illusion—makes an exceedingly strong impression. A vivid—a grateful affection for you grew up within me. I felt I must come to you; see you again; tell you that I shared the feelings which I imagined you entertained for me.

BOLETTA.

But now, when you know that it was not so! That it was a mistake!

ARNHOLM.

That makes no difference, Boletta. Your image—as it dwells in my heart—will always remain coloured and thrown into relief by the feeling that mistake aroused in me. Perhaps you cannot understand this; but so it is.

BOLETTA.

I never dreamed that anything of the kind was possible.

ARNHOLM.

But now that you see it is——? What do you say, Boletta? Can you not make up your mind to—to be my wife?

BOLETTA.

Oh, it seems so utterly impossible, Mr. Arnholm. You, who have been my teacher! I cannot imagine myself standing in any other kind of relation to you.

ARNHOLM.

Well, well—if you feel absolutely sure that you cannot —then the relation between us remains unaltered, my dear Boletta.

BOLETTA.

How do you mean?

ARNHOLM.

Of course I stand to my proposition, none the less. I will take care that you get away from home and see something of the world. I will enable you to learn what you really want to, and live in security and independence. Your more distant future, too, I will provide for, Boletta. In me you will always have a firm, steadfast friend to rely upon. Be sure of that!

BOLETTA.

Oh dear—Mr. Arnholm—all this has become quite impossible now.

ARNHOLM.

Is this impossible too?

BOLETTA.

Yes, surely you can see it is! After what you have said to me—and after the answer I have given you——. Oh, you must surely understand that I cannot accept such great favours from you! I can accept nothing in the world from you; never after this!

ARNHOLM.

Then would you rather stay at home here and let life slip away from you?

BOLETTA.

Oh, it is torture to think of it!

ARNHOLM.

Will you renounce all hope of seeing something of the outer world? Renounce your chance of taking part in all that you say you are thirsting for? Can you know that life has such infinite possibilities—and yet be content to realise no single one of them? Think well, Boletta.

BOLETTA.

Yes, yes—you are quite right, Mr. Arnholm.

ARNHOLM.

And then—when your father is no longer with you—you might find yourself helpless and alone in the world. Or you might have to give yourself to another man—whom you—possibly—might not be able to care for, any more than for me.

BOLETTA.

Oh yes,—I see quite well how true it is—all that you say. But still—!——Or perhaps, after all——

ARNHOLM.

[*Quickly.*] Well!

BOLETTA.

[*Looks at him, undecided.*] Perhaps it might not be utterly impossible after all——

ARNHOLM.

What, Boletta?

BOLETTA.

That I might—perhaps agree to—what—what you proposed to me.

ARNHOLM.

Do you mean that perhaps you might——? That at least you would grant me the happiness of coming to your aid as a faithful friend?

BOLETTA.

No, no, no! Never that! T h a t would be absolutely impossible now. No—Mr. Arnholm—I had rather you should take me——

ARNHOLM.

Boletta! Will you——!

BOLETTA.

Yes,—I think—I will.

ARNHOLM.

You will be my wife?

BOLETTA.

Yes; if you still think you—ought to take me.

ARNHOLM.

If I think——! [*Seizes her hand.*] Oh thanks, thanks, Boletta! What you have been saying—your hesitation at first—that does not alarm me. If I do not fully possess your heart as yet, I shall know how to win it. Oh Boletta, how I will treasure you!

BOLETTA.

And I am to see the world; to take part in its life; you have promised me that.

ARNHOLM.

And I hold to it.

BOLETTA.

And I am to learn everything I want to.

ARNHOLM.

I myself will be your teacher, as in the old days, Boletta. Think of the last year you were my pupil——

BOLETTA.

[*In quiet self-absorption.*] Fancy,—to know oneself free—to go out into the unknown world! And then to have no care for the future; no constant fears about miserable money——

ARNHOLM.

No, you shall never have to waste a thought on such things. And, my dear Boletta, that is a good thing too, in its way—isn't it now?

BOLETTA.

Yes, it is indeed. I know it is.

ARNHOLM.

[*Putting his arm round her waist.*] Oh you shall see how cosily and comfortably we will arrange our life! And what peace and confidence there will be between us, Boletta!

BOLETTA.

Yes, I begin to——. I really think—that we ought to get on together. [*Looks out to the right, and hurriedly disengages herself.*] Ah! Please don't say anything about it!

ARNHOLM.

What is the matter, dear?

BOLETTA.

Oh, it's that poor—— [*Points.*] Over there.

ARNHOLM.

Is it your father——?

BOLETTA.

No, it's the young sculptor. He is walking over there with Hilda.

ARNHOLM.

Oh, Lyngstrand. Why should you trouble about him?

BOLETTA.

Oh you know how delicate and ill he is.

ARNHOLM.

Yes, if it isn't all his imagination.

BOLETTA.

No, it is real; he cannot live long. But perhaps it is best for him.

ARNHOLM.

How best for him, my dear?

BOLETTA.

Well because,—because I don't think much would come of his art in any case.—Let us go before they come.

ARNHOLM.

By all means, my dear Boletta.

[HILDA *and* LYNGSTRAND *appear beside the pond.*

HILDA.

Hi! Hi! Won't you condescend to wait for us?

ARNHOLM.

Boletta and I would rather go on ahead.

[*He and* BOLETTA *go out to the left.*

LYNGSTRAND.

[*Laughs quietly.*] It is quite amusing here just now; everybody goes in couples; always two and two together.

HILDA.

[*Looks after them.*] I could almost swear that he is making love to her.

LYNGSTRAND.

Really? Have you seen anything to make you think so?

HILDA.

Oh yes. It's easy to see it—if you keep your eyes about you.

LYNGSTRAND.

But Miss Boletta will not have him. I am sure of that

HILDA.

No. She thinks he looks so frightfully old: and she's afraid he'll soon be bald too.

LYNGSTRAND.

Ah, I don't mean only because of that. She would not have him in any case.

HILDA.

How can you know that?

LYNGSTRAND.

Well, because there is some one else she has promised to keep in her thoughts.

HILDA.

Only to keep in her thoughts?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, while he is away.

HILDA.

Oh, then I suppose it's you she is to keep in her thoughts.

LYNGSTRAND.

Possibly.

HILDA.

Has she promised you that?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, only think—she has promised me that! But please, please don't tell her that you know about it.

HILDA.

Oh, don't be afraid: I am as silent as the grave.

LYNGSTRAND.

I think it is so tremendously kind of her.

HILDA.

And then, when you come home again—is it to be an engagement? Are you going to marry her?

LYNGSTRAND.

No, I scarcely think that would do. You see, marriage is out of the question for me for a few years yet;

and then, when I have made my way, she will be a bit too old for me, I fancy.

HILDA.

And yet you want her to go on thinking of you?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes; for it would help me so much; as an artist, you understand. And she, having no special vocation of her own in life, can so easily do it.—But it is kind of her, all the same.

HILDA.

Do you think, then, that you can get on quicker with your group if you know that Boletta is thinking of you at home here?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, I imagine so. You see, the knowledge that somewhere in the world a young, exquisite, silent woman is secretly dreaming of one—I think it must be so—so——. Well, I scarcely know what to call it.

HILDA.

Do you mean—thrilling?

LYNGSTRAND.

Thrilling? Oh yes. It is thrilling I mean; or something of that sort. [*Looks at her a moment.*] You are so bright, Miss Hilda; really you are very bright, you know. When I come home again you will be just about as old as your sister is now. Perhaps you will look as she looks

now; and perhaps you will have grown like her in mind as well. Very likely you will be, as it were, both yourself and her—in one body, so to speak.

HILDA.

Would that please you?

LYNGSTRAND.

I don't quite know. Yes, I almost think so. But now—for this summer—I prefer you to be like yourself alone—just exactly as you are.

HILDA.

Do you like me best so?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, I like you exceedingly as you are.

HILDA.

H'm,—tell me,—as an artist—do you think I do right in always wearing light summer dresses?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, I think you do perfectly right.

HILDA.

Then you think bright colours suit me?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, charmingly, to my taste.

HILDA.

But tell me—as an artist—how do you think I should look in black?

LYNGSTRAND.

In black, Miss Hilda?

HILDA.

Yes, all in black. Do you think I should look nice?

LYNGSTRAND.

Black is scarcely the thing for the summer-time. But for that matter I am sure you would look extremely well in black too. Yes, you have just the figure for it.

HILDA.

[*Gazing before her.*] In black right up to the neck—a black ruffle—black gloves and a long black veil behind.

LYNGSTRAND.

If you were dressed like that, Miss Hilda, I should long to be a painter—so that I might paint a young, lovely, broken-hearted widow.

HILDA.

Or a young girl mourning for her betrothed.

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, that would suit you still better. But you can't wish to dress yourself like that?

HILDA.

I don't know; I think it is thrilling.

LYNGSTRAND.

Thrilling?

HILDA.

Thrilling to think of, yes. [*Points suddenly to the left.*] Oh, look t h e r e !

LYNGSTRAND.

[*Looking in the direction indicated.*] The big English steamer! And right in at the pier!

WANGEL *and* ELLIDA *appear by the pond.*

WANGEL.

No, I assure you, my dear Ellida, you are mistaken. [*Sees the others.*] What, are you two here? She is not in sight yet, is she, Mr. Lyngstrand?

LYNGSTRAND.

The big English boat?

WANGEL.

Yes.

LYNGSTRAND.

[*Pointing.*] There she lies already, Doctor.

ELLIDA.

Ah—! I knew it.

WANGEL.

She is come!

LYNGSTRAND.

Come like a thief in the night, you might say—softly and noiselessly——

WANGEL.

You must take Hilda down to the pier. Make haste! I'm sure she would like to hear the music.

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, we were just going, Doctor.

WANGEL.

We will perhaps come afterwards. We'll come presently.

HILDA.

[*Whispers to* LYNGSTRAND.] Another pair, you see.

[*She and* LYNGSTRAND *go out through the garden to the left. Distant music of wind instruments is heard out on the fiord during what follows.*

ELLIDA.

He has come! He is here! Yes, yes—I feel it.

WANGEL.

You had better go in, Ellida. Let me see him alone.

ELLIDA.

Oh—it is impossible! Impossible, I say! [*With a cry.*] Ah—do you see him Wangel!

THE STRANGER *enters from the left and stops on the footpath, outside the garden fence.*

THE STRANGER.

[*Bows.*] Good evening. I have come again you see, Ellida.

ELLIDA.

Yes, yes, yes,—the hour has come.

THE STRANGER.

Are you ready to go with me? Or are you not?

WANGEL.

You can see for yourself that she is not.

THE STRANGER.

I was not thinking of travelling-clothes and trunks and that sort of thing. I have on board with me everything she requires for the voyage; and I have taken a cabin for her. [*To* ELLIDA.] I ask you, then, if you are ready to come with me—to come with me of your own free will?

ELLIDA.

[*Imploringly.*] Oh, do not ask me! Do not tempt me so! [*A steamer bell is heard in the distance.*

THE STRANGER.

There goes the warning bell. Now you must say yes or no.

ELLIDA.

[*Wrings her hands.*] To have to decide! To decide for all time! To do what can never be undone!

THE STRANGER.

Never. In half an hour it will be too late.

ELLIDA.

[*Looks timidly and intently at him.*] What makes you hold to me so persistently?

THE STRANGER.

Do you not feel, as I do, that we two belong to each other?

ELLIDA.

Do you mean because of that promise?

THE STRANGER.

Promises bind no one: neither man nor woman. If I hold to you persistently, it is because I cannot do otherwise.

ELLIDA.

[*Softly and trembling.*] Why did you not come sooner?

WANGEL.

Ellida!

ELLIDA.

[*With an outburst of emotion.*] Oh—what is it that tempts and allures and seems to drag me into the unknown! The whole might of the sea is centred in this one thing! [THE STRANGER *climbs over the garden fence.*

ELLIDA.

[*Shrinks behind* WANGEL.] What is it? What do you want?

THE STRANGER.

I see it—I hear it in your voice, Ellida—it is me you will choose in the end.

WANGEL.

[*Advances towards him.*] My wife has no choice in the matter. I am here to choose for her and—to protect her. Yes, protect her! If you do not get away from here—out of the country—and never come back—do you know what you expose yourself to?

ELLIDA.

No, no, Wangel! Not that!

THE STRANGER.

What will you do to me?

WANGEL.

I will have you arrested—as a felon! At once! Before you can get on board! I know all about the murder out at Skioldvik.

ELLIDA.

Oh Wangel,—how can you——?

THE STRANGER.

I was prepared for that move; and therefore,—[*Takes a revolver out of his breast pocket*],—I have provided myself with this.

ELLIDA.

[*Throws herself before* WANGEL.] No, no—do not kill him! Rather kill me!

THE STRANGER

Neither you nor him; be easy on that score. This is for myself; I will live and die a free man!

ELLIDA.

[*With increasing agitation.*] Wangel! Let me tell you this—tell you in his hearing! I know you can keep me here! You have the power, and no doubt you will use it! But my mind—all my thoughts—all my irresistible longings and desires—these you cannot fetter! They will yearn and strain—out into the unknown—that I was created for—and that you have barred against me!

WANGEL.

[*In quiet grief.*] I see it clearly, Ellida! Step by step you are gliding away from me. Your craving for the limitless and the infinite—and for the unattainable—will drive your mind quite out into the darkness at last.

ELLIDA.

Oh yes, yes,—I feel it—like black soundless wings hovering over me!

WANGEL.

It shall not come to that. There is no other way of deliverance for you; at least I see none. And therefore —therefore I—cancel our bargain on the spot.—Now you can choose your own path—in full—full freedom.

ELLIDA.

[*Gazes at him awhile as if speechless.*] Is this true—true—what you say? Do you mean it—from your inmost heart?

WANGEL.

Yes,—from the inmost depths of my tortured heart, I mean it.

ELLIDA.

And c a n you do it? Can you carry out your purpose?

WANGEL.

Yes, I can. I can—because of my great love for you.

ELLIDA.

[*Softly and tremblingly.*] And I have come to be so near—so dear to you!

WANGEL.

The years of our marriage have made you so.

ELLIDA.

[*Clasps her hands together.*] And I,—I have been blind to it!

WANGEL.

Your thoughts went in other directions. But now,—now you are set wholly free from me and mine. Now your own true life can return to its—its right groove again. For now you can choose in freedom; and on your own responsibility, Ellida.

ELLIDA.

[*Clasps her head with her hands and gazes fixedly towards* WANGEL.] In freedom—and on my own respon-

sibility? Responsibility! This—this transforms everything. [*The steamer bell rings again.*

THE STRANGER.

Do you hear, Ellida? The bell is ringing for the last time. Come away!

ELLIDA.

[*Turns towards him, looks fixedly at him, and says with determination in her voice.*] I can never go with you after this.

THE STRANGER.

You will not go?

ELLIDA.

[*Clings to* WANGEL.] Oh—after this I can never leave you!

WANGEL.

Ellida,—Ellida!

THE STRANGER.

It is all over then?

ELLIDA.

Yes! Over for all time!

THE STRANGER.

I see it. There is something here that is stronger than my will.

ELLIDA.

Your will has no longer a feather's weight with me. For me you are a dead man, who has come home from

the sea—and who is returning to it again. But I am no longer in terror of you: you fascinate me no more.

THE STRANGER.

Good-bye, Mrs. Wangel! [*He vaults over the fence.*] Henceforth you[1] are nothing but—a bygone shipwreck in my life. [*He goes out to the left.*

WANGEL.

[*Looks at her awhile.*] Ellida—your mind is like the sea: it has its ebb and flow. What brought the transformation?

ELLIDA.

Oh, do you not understand that the transformation came,—that it h a d to come—when I could choose in freedom.

WANGEL.

And the unknown,—it fascinates you no longer?

ELLIDA.

It neither fascinates nor frightens me. I could have seen into it—gone into it—if I had wished to. I was free to choose it; and therefore I was able to reject it.

WANGEL.

I begin to understand you—by degrees. You think and conceive in images—in visible pictures. Your longing and yearning for the sea—the fascination that he—the stranger—possessed for you—must have been the

[1] Here, for the first time, he uses the formal *De*.

expression of an awakening and growing need for freedom within you—nothing else.

ELLIDA.

Oh, I don't know what to say to that. But you have been a good physician for me. You f o u n d,—and you had the courage to u s e,—the right remedy—the o n l y one that could help me.

WANGEL.

Yes, in the last extremity of danger, we physicians have courage for much.—But now you will come to me again, will you not, Ellida?

ELLIDA.

Yes, my dear, faithful Wangel—now I will come to you again. I can now, for now I come to you in freedom—of my own will—and on my own responsibility.

WANGEL.

[*Looks tenderly at her.*] Ellida! Ellida! Oh,—to think that we two can now live wholly for each other——

ELLIDA.

——and with all our memories in common. Yours—as well as mine.

WANGEL.

Yes, all in common, dearest!

ELLIDA.

And our two children, Wangel——

WANGEL.

O u r s you call them!

ELLIDA.

They are not mine yet—but I shall win them.

WANGEL.

Ours——! [*Kisses her hands joyfully and quickly.*] Oh, I thank you for that word more than I can tell.

HILDA, BALLESTED, LYNGSTRAND, ARNHOLM, *and* BOLETTA *come from the left into the garden. At the same time a number of young townspeople and summer visitors pass along the footpath.*

HILDA.

[*Half aloud, to* LYNGSTRAND.] Just look,—don't she and father look like an engaged couple!

BALLESTED.

[*Who has overheard.*] It is summer time, little miss.

ARNHOLM.

[*Looks towards* WANGEL *and* ELLIDA.] The English steamer is under way.

BOLETTA.

[*Goes to the fence.*] You can see her best from here.

LYNGSTRAND.

The last trip of the season.

BALLESTED.

"Soon will all the straits be ice-bound," as the poet says. It is sad, Mrs. Wangel! And I hear we are to lose you too for a time: you go out to Skioldvik to-morrow, I am told.

WANGEL.

No—that plan has come to nothing; this evening we two have changed our minds.

ARNHOLM.

[*Looking from one to the other.*] Ah,—really!

BOLETTA.

[*Coming forward.*] Father—is this true?

HILDA.

[*Going to* ELLIDA.] Are you going to stay with us after all?

ELLIDA.

Yes, dear Hilda—if you will have me.

HILDA.

[*Struggling between tears and joy.*] Oh,—can you ask —if I will——!

ARNHOLM.

[*To* ELLIDA.] This is really quite a surprise!

ELLIDA.

[*With a grave smile.*] Well, you see, Mr. Arnholm—— Do you remember what we were speaking of yesterday?

When you have once for all become a land-animal—you can never find the way back again—out to the sea. Nor to the sea-life either.

BALLESTED.

Why, that's just the case of my mermaid!

ELLIDA.

Very like it, yes.

BALLESTED.

Only with this difference, that the mermaid—s h e dies of it. Human beings, on the contrary—they can acclam—accli—matise themselves. Yes, I assure you, Mrs. Wangel, they c a n ac-cli-matise themselves.

ELLIDA.

Yes, in freedom they can, Mr. Ballested.

WANGEL.

And under full responsibility, dear Ellida.

ELLIDA.

[*Quickly, holding out her hand to him.*] T h a t is the secret.

[*The great steamer glides noiselessly down the fiord. The music is heard closer inshore.*

THE END.

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
AA 000 660 358 3

3 1210 00315 2764